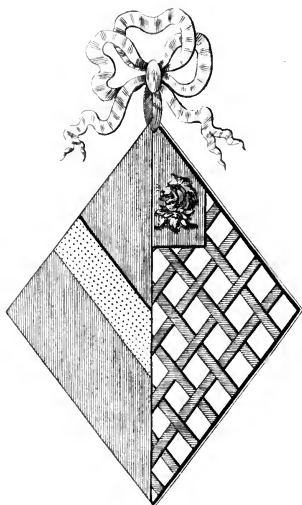


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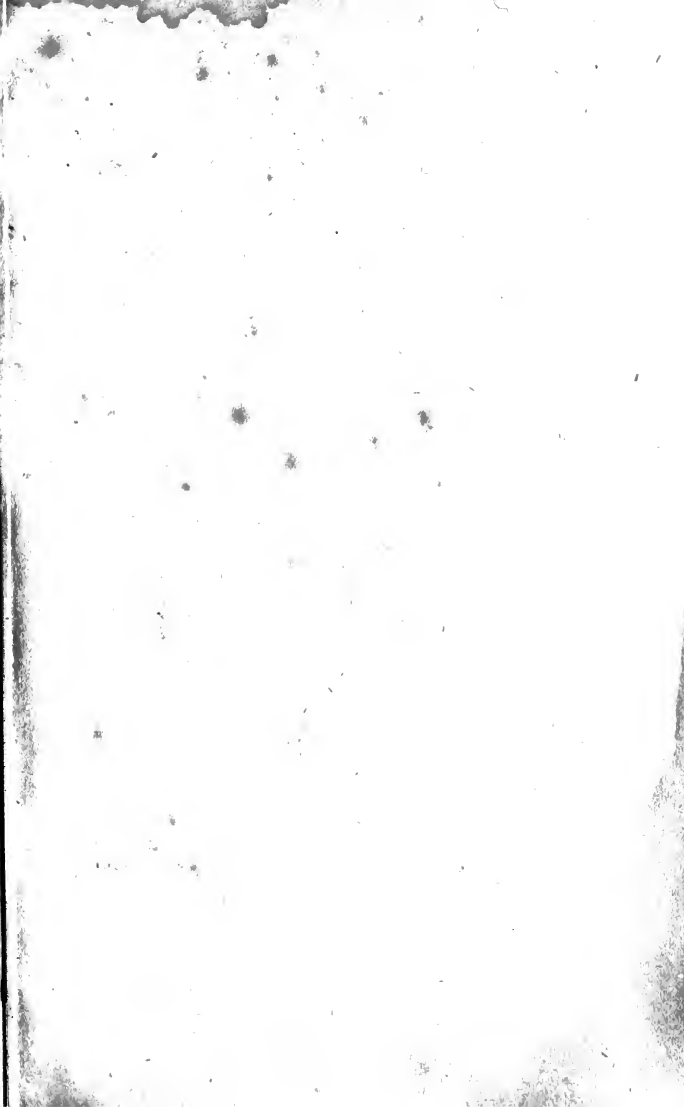
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PHINEAS QUIDDY:

OR,

SHEER INDUSTRY.

BY JOHN POOLE, Esq.

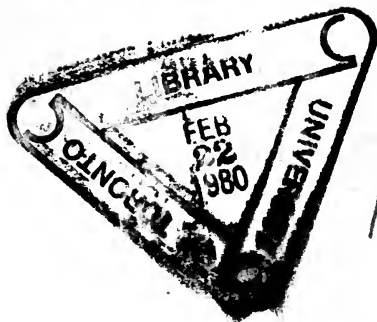
AUTHOR OF "PAUL PRY," "LITTLE PEDLINGTON," ETC.

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APOLOGY FOR A PREFACE.

I HAD originally intended to write a formal preface to these volumes ; but, upon reconsideration, I have thought it unnecessary. This after-thought spares some trouble to myself, and some, also, to the reader. The book, as it stands, must speak for itself ; for since, *probably*, people of a suspicious turn of mind would conceive that I am personally interested in its welfare, my good word for it might be received with a small degree of caution. I shall, therefore, merely observe of it, that it is *unromantic*, *unfashionable*, *unfine* ; and there being already so much of the *fine*, the *fashionable*, and the *romantic*, this may be something in its favour. Its chief object is to elucidate a principle which is stated at the very outset of the work. The character of the hero, Phineas Quiddy, which is employed for that purpose, is, in many of its points, drawn from real life—as, indeed, I may say of several of the cha-

racters introduced in the story ; and the incidents are, for the greater part, founded on fact. In a word, I have endeavoured generally to adhere, as closely as might be consistent with a work of this kind, to Nature and to Truth—with what success, it is not (for a reason just alluded to) for me to decide.

J. P.

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PHINEAS QUIDDY:

OR,

SHEER INDUSTRY.

CHAPTER I.

Sheer Industry a suspicious Term—The Advantages of beginning the World with *Nothing*—Introduction of the Hero—At his Start in Life he has the rare good Fortune to be possessed of *Nothing*—By what Means he converts that Property into *Something*—A Friend to the Needy, his Virtue is rewarded—*True* Sheer Industry and its Results exemplified by a brief History of a worthy Scot, his Master.

PHINEAS QUIDDY began the world with *Nothing*: by dint of *Sheer Industry*, as he always boasted, he became possessed of upwards of one hundred thousand pounds.

We do not cite this as a rare instance of the important advantage of entering upon business with *Nothing*: on the contrary, we could mention many others; so many, indeed, that in spite of Shakspeare, who tells us that “nothing can come of nothing,” it would seem that *Nothing* is the prolific seed from which some of the largest fortunes in London have been grown. One man walks all the way from Leith to London, and, at his journey’s end, finds himself with only three farthings in his pocket: a few years elapse, and he has converted each farthing into a plum! He proudly boasts that his fortune was achieved by sheer industry. A second begins by doling out halfpenny-worths of

hazel-nuts from a basket slung across his shoulders : by-and-bye he starts forth upon the astonished world lord mayor of London ! Sheer industry again. A third——

Now *Nothing* is a term sufficiently intelligible : were it otherwise, there be thousands and thousands who could explain it, with Johnsonian precision, by simply turning their pockets inside out. But we apprehend that *Sheer Industry* is one of not so definite a signification, and that (at least in the cases we have mentioned) it must mean industry—and *something more*. As to what that “something more” may be, we may perhaps be not a little enlightened by using the career of Phineas Quiddy as our lexicon.

Phineas Quiddy was the son of a poor labourer at the London Docks, and, when about twelve years old, was placed with one Sandy Sanderson, a worthy Scot, who kept a snuff-shop, of the humblest pretensions, in Cow-lane, Shoreditch. Here his duties were to sweep the shop, go errands, assist or relieve his master in serving the customers (for Sandy was waxing old), and do whatever else might be required of him ; for all which he received lodging and food, and sixpence a-week.

A stipendiary in the enjoyment of fifty-two sixpences *per annum*, Master Phineas thought himself a prosperous gentleman ; but as out of his income he had to provide himself with clothes, he found at the end of the year, that although his tradesmen’s bills had not been numerous, they had, nevertheless, left him in possession of that which we have already noticed as the surest foundation for future fortune—nothing. But, somehow,—the consequence of his youth and inexperience, perhaps,—little Phineas did not properly appreciate the advantages of his position : he did not reflect upon the number of aldermen and lord mayors who, by the magic of sheer industry, had converted

precisely the same amount of capital as his own into India-stock and Consols ; and he set himself about thinking how he might, by the end of the next year, have acquired something rather more palpable.

It happened that the greater portion of Mr. Sanderson's customers were artisans and poor labourers, who frequently, towards the end of the week, would come empty-handed for their modicums of snuff or tobacco, entreating to be supplied, and promising to pay on Saturday-night. But Sandy was a strict man, and as he never took credit, so was he obdurate in refusing it. He was also a rigidly honest man, and in the adjustment of his scales a very Portia—never allowing them to turn “but in the estimation of a hair.” Upon these two points the following were his instructions to his assistant : “Firstly : never upon any account give credit, boy : selling upon credit may lead to ruin, and buying upon credit often brings poor folks into trouble. Next : see that the beam of your scales be even : a turn above weight is a loss to me ; a turn below, a wrong to the customer : ‘Mony a little maks a mickle ;’ and a grain too much given many times a day, will amount to pounds’ weight at the year’s end.”

To these instructions had little Quiddy hitherto most scrupulously adhered ; but it now occurred to him that, from a slight evasion of one of them, he might derive profit to himself without doing the smallest injury either to his master or his master’s customers. But in order to carry his scheme into execution, *capital* was requisite ; he waited therefore till the savings of his weekly wages had placed several shillings at his command. And now behold the young financier unmoved, as usual, by the most artful persuasion to part with his master’s goods upon trust, kindly offering to *lend* the supplicant money to supply his wants—only requiring the deposit of some article or other as security for its return on the Saturday

evening, and just taking one farthing upon each penny advanced, simply because (as he always said upon those occasions) "In this world nobody can't be expected to do nothing for nobody else for nothing"—a principle from which, throughout his life, he never departed. These financial operations (carried on, we need scarcely say, without the knowledge of old Sandy) were so frequently repeated, that, at the end of next year, Phineas Quiddy found himself a gainer by them of nearly five pounds—the first-fruits of his boasted *sheer industry*.

His sheer industry served him again in another way connected with these transactions: for if the deposits, which he always took care should be worth much more than the sums advanced upon them, were not redeemed at the stipulated hour, he declared them forfeit, and exacted a fee for their restoration.

In proportion as his means to serve his friends increased, so did his own little private business; till, at the age of twenty, Mr. Quiddy had the pleasure of finding that he had accumulated nearly two hundred pounds. Such is the reward of sheer industry!

The infirmities of old Sanderson had, for some time past, compelled him to entrust the entire management of his shop to Quiddy, who still received but small wages. With such, however, he was satisfied, as, at the age of twenty-one he was to be admitted as a partner in the business—his own little private trade, moreover, being a thriving one—when, lo! just at this time poor old Sandy died, bequeathing all his earthly possessions to his widow. Now let us see what were those earthly possessions, the reward of sheer industry in the case of poor old Sandy Sanderson.

During the forty years that Sandy had kept the little snuff-shop at Shoreditch, he had never, for a single day, been absent from the receipt of custom, except when compelled by illness: never was he

enticed from it by pleasure or amusement. So long as health and strength remained he required no assistance in his work, but with his own hands laboured to supply his own wants. He was frugal in his habits, and, as we have shown, strictly just in his dealings. He bought his little commodities at fair prices, of fair traders, and sold them at reasonable profits.

But though frugal, Sandy was no churl: he loved such of the good things of this world as are usually within the reach of persons of his class; and as he acquired by his own industry the means of procuring them, he wisely and truly considered that he might occasionally, and in moderation, partake of them. His favourite meal was supper; for, the shop being shut, and the labour of the day at an end, he could sit down with his old woman—for so, from the first day of his marriage, he had always called his wife—to the uninterrupted enjoyment of it. Now and then, though seldom, a Scotch friend or neighbour would be invited to his humble board, and the evening would be wound up (as, indeed, with Sandy it always was) with a pipe, and a tumbler of comfortable, hot, whisky-toddy. Sunday was his only holiday, and this he enjoyed with intense delight; for, after church, which was succeeded by an early dinner, he would tuck his wife under his arm, and (weather permitting) devote the remainder of the day to a pleasant ramble, for air and exercise, about the picturesque brick-fields of Hackney or Holloway.

But there was one trait in the character of Sandy Sanderson too creditable to him to be omitted: he was charitable to the extent of his limited means; and though deaf to the appeals of common beggary, a poor, if a deserving, Scot—for Sandy, not having much to give away, confined his charities almost exclusively to his own countrymen—never sought his assistance in vain. But these donations, of a shilling, or, haply, a little more, according to the necessities of the case,

were always accompanied with a gentle admonition to the applicant not to come again upon a similar errand to one who had so little to spare, "unless," would Sandy say, "unless you find you canna just help yoursel', and then," (adding with a sigh)—"Ech, guid Lord ! it's a hard world for the best o' us, mon."

It would sometimes happen that, in addition to the donation, the applicant would request (and a very moderate request it would seem) a few pinches of snuff in a twist of paper ; but this was always met by a direct refusal.

"Gi'e awa' my snuff, mon ! where the deil will Sandy Sanderson find a spare shilling for a puir countryman, if he is to gi'e awa the commodities he lives by ? Nae, nae ; an ye want snuff ye maun just buy it, and as weel lay out your money wi' me as wi' anither."

And hereupon would Sandy, with the same scrupulous accuracy as in other cases, weigh out a halfpenny-worth of snuff, and take payment for it out of the shilling which he had just before given—congratulating himself upon this addition to his day's profits.

Well ;—Sandy Sanderson dying, left behind him about five hundred pounds, the savings of forty years of sheer industry (in the strict sense of the term), fair trading, and frugality ; together with his furniture and stock in trade, which were barely worth three hundred—a charming little figure of a Highlander, with his fingers to his nostrils, which decorated one side of his shop-door, and a glossy jet-black boy, the other, being taken into the valuation.

And now let us return to the career of Mr. Sheer-industry Quidy.

CHAPTER II.

Janet Gray introduced: a Touch of the (un) Romantic—Quiddy's first Love—His Declaration, and how it was received—Effects of an unsuccessful popping of the Question noticed, and its sad Consequences to our Hero—"The Course of true Love never did run smooth."

THE widow of Sandy being old, lame, and purblind, was but too glad to retain Quiddy in his post; till, at the stipulated period, she honourably fulfilled her late husband's promise of admitting him as a partner in the business, allowing him a one-third share of its profits.

Another twelvemonth elapsed, and Janet Gray had entered her eighteenth year.

Now, it was not through forgetfulness that we omitted to mention Janet Gray ere this: we purposely abstained from noticing her till we found her appearance to be useful; and, even now, she is of little further utility than as serving to mark a point in the character of Phineas Quiddy and to illustrate his progress, *to which all else may be considered subordinate.*

Janet was a distant relative of the late worthy tobacconist; and being left, about six years prior to this period, an orphan and friendless in the town of Aberdeen, was sent for by the Sandersons to officiate as their maid-of-all-work. In this capacity she had plenty to do; but (such are the advantages of order, and a judicious distribution of time), she nevertheless found leisure to fall deeply in love with Phineas. This would seem to have been a more difficult job than trundling a mop, scrubbing a floor, or even cooking a scrag of mutton—at least, we should think so, were we ignorant of the tricks played with the

heart by the little God of Love, for Phineas was neither handsome nor amiable. To say that the young gentleman returned, or even encouraged, her affections would be untrue ; but as he never said or did anything to lead her to imagine the contrary, she naturally believed he did, which was, in its consequences, the same thing to her.

And thus did he prudently argue with himself :

“As I can't lose anything by letting the girl go on liking me, I shan't say anything to hinder her : and as I don't see what I could get by it if I did, matters may just as well remain as they are. At all events that can't do *me* any harm.”

With respect to Janet's person (although quite good enough for Mr. Phineas), it was by no means what the world calls handsome. And although a writer of a tale of fiction intending her for his “heroine,” or an imaginative auctioneer advertising her for sale, would talk about fragile and sylphlike form, roses and lilies, and monumental alabaster—dimples, pouting lips, azure eyes, and golden tresses—we prefer describing her in the language of truth, and shall avail ourselves, therefore, of the simple, but expressive words of one of her neighbours :—

“Well, to be sure, Janet Gray is as dumpy, ugly a little body as ever was seen ; but then, bless her ! what a sweet, angel's temper she has got !”

Good enough, did we say ! Confound him ! with such a point in her favour, she was forty times too good for him.

Janet had often thought to herself what a nice thing it must be to be married : Phineas had often thought the same thing. But though two minds had come to precisely the same conclusion, the arguments which led to it were totally different.

“I do love Phineas,” thought Janet, “and I'm sure we should be very happy if we were married !”

“One-third share in this business is no bad thing,”

thought Phineas, "but the whole three-thirds would be a great deal better."

On the evening of the day upon which old widow Sanderson discarded her weeds, she was sitting quietly in the little back-parlour with Quiddy—the shop being closed, and Janet busied in the kitchen preparing supper. The old woman was seated at one side of the fire, poring over a large family Bible ; Quiddy, at the other, was occupied in twiddling betwixt the bars with the poker, looking exceedingly sheepish, and occasionally uttering a short, single cough, indicating the pressure of something upon his mind, of which something he did not know how to relieve it.

At length he summoned up resolution to unburden himself, and thus began :—

"Ahem!—Mrs.—Ma'am—Mrs Sanderson—I—I—"

"Well, boy, speak out : what have you got to say?" said Mrs Sanderson, at the same time closing her Bible, and placing her spectacles in it to mark the place where she had left off reading.

"Why, ma'am, I—I'm just turned two-and-twenty, and I've been thinking—I say, ma'am, I—I mean, ma'am, do *you* think it's a good thing to be married?" stammered Quiddy.

"I'm sure," replied Mrs. Sanderson, bursting into tears, "I'm sure it would be very wicked of me to say the contrary ; for my poor, dear, dead-and-gone Sandy and I, who were man and wife nearly forty years, were as happy together as doves. Ah !" continued she, her tears increasing as she spoke, "though he was only a poor tobacconist, and kept the sign of the Black Boy and Highlander, at the corner of Cow-lane, Shoreditch, on *this* side the grave, he's a winged angel at this moment, if ever there was one."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Quiddy, sighing ; "don't cry, ma'am, for, after all, losing a husband ^{but} like losing one's money : if one loses that, it's a ch ^{isn't}

if one ever gets it back again ; but there are such loads of men and women in the world, it is easy enough to find another husband or another wife, for which,"—and as he uttered these words, he clasped his hands, and piously turned his eyes upwards to the ceiling,—“for which we ought to be very thankful.”

A pause ensued, which was broken by Mrs. Sanderson.

“And so you have some thoughts of getting married ?”

“Thoughts ! Bent on it, ma'am,” said the young tobacconist, in a tone of determination ; adding, with extreme tenderness, “and don't you think it will be better for both of us ?”

“I am satisfied of it, and the sooner still the better. You have now a third of the business, and when you are married, you shall have—”

“Oh, ma'am—oh, Mrs. Sanderson,” cried the enraptured Quiddy, starting on his legs, and interrupting her ; “I can't find words to tell you how happy you have made me. Stock in trade—furniture—five hundred pounds in the—”

Mrs. Sanderson, in her turn, cut through the conversation.

“And poor Janet, too, will be happy when we tell her this.”

Unobserved by the interlocutors, at this moment the parlour-door was partially opened, and Janet, who had caught the last words, stood withoutside, breathless and motionless.

Mrs. Sanderson continued : “Janet loves you dearly, Phineas ; I know she does.”

“But, ma'am,” said Quiddy, somewhat astonished, “what has her love for me to do with what *we* are talking about ? Howsomever, that's her affair ; and, love me ever so, I'll take my oath I never gave her no encouragement.”

“What !” exclaimed Mrs. Sanderson ; “and don't you love Janet ?”

"Love *her*? why, bless you, ma'am, the thing is a moral impossible, and not in human nature. How can one love anybody that an't got nothing?"

"Well, when Mr. Sanderson married me, I had nothing—nothing but industry and a true heart; yet *you* have seen how happily we lived together. However, since you have confessed you don't love the poor girl, you *shan't* marry her—I'll take care of that."

"Marry *her*!" exclaimed Quiddy; "I never dreamt of such a thing; besides I—ma'am—my—Mrs. Sanderson—my affections is already engaged."

"And who, pray, has already engaged your affections?"

"Can't *you* guess, ma'am?" said Quiddy, screwing his ugly face into an expression of as much tenderness as it was capable of.

"Guess? no," said the old woman; "how should I be able to guess more than others? Speak out."

Quiddy hesitated, stammered, and twisted his thumbs; and then, by a desperate effort, delivered himself of the words—

"Oh! who *should* it be but your own dear self, Mrs. S."

"Me — *me*!! — ME!!!" exclaimed Mrs. S., half stupified with astonishment. Then recovering herself she said—"Why, you senseless, unfeeling brute! I'm old enough to be your grandmother! Shame upon you. But, old as I am, my eyes are still clear enough to see into your dirty, interested motives."

Quiddy, who had calculated too securely upon what he might have heard, or perhaps read in the newspaper, of the avidity with which an old woman will sometimes seize the offer of a young suitor, was so completely taken aback by this rebuff, as to be rendered incapable of uttering a word in reply.

Mrs. Sanderson took a huge pinch of snuff, put on her spectacles, and silently renewed the reading of her Bible; whilst her lover, pretending to cry, put his

handkerchief to his eyes, and (as if the shock had taken away his breath) went through the shop, opened the door, and stood for some minutes to inhale the reviving air of Cow-lane.

Of all the burdens ever imposed upon a human being, the heaviest to carry is a sad heart. The step of that "dumpy, ugly little body," Janet Gray, was usually light and rapid. At this moment might have been heard, descending the kitchen-stairs, a tread slow, measured, and heavy.

"Well!" thought Mrs. Sanderson, as soon as she was left alone to her reflections, "well! who would have thought it! What could have put it into his head that, at my age, I should ever dream of making such a fool of myself—worse than a fool! The heartless, the unfeeling, the money-gripping ——! To refuse a young, healthy, good girl like Janet, who would have been a treasure of a wife to him, and talk of marriage to an infirm old woman like me, who, mercy on me! ought to be thinking more of burying than wedding; and all this with a selfish eye to my little worldly possessions! Well! though I never gave him credit for much generosity of character, I should hardly have thought him such a—. No matter; he has opened my eyes to what he really is, and I ought to be grateful to Heaven for it: else a poor lone widow like me might have—Ah! dear, dear! what a world we live in!"

And having terminated her mental soliloquy, she gave three taps on the floor with her crutch-stick, the usual signal to Janet that she was ready for supper. Presently Janet made her appearance, laid the cloth, and placed the humble meal upon the table. This operation (like everything else indeed that Janet had to do), had hitherto been performed with an alacrity of movement and a smiling countenance, usually accompanied by the humming of a snatch of some favourite tune. Upon this occasion she was silent and slow of

motion, and seemed to lift each little article from the tray to the table with as great an effort as if it had been a hundred weight ; whilst a quicker ear than Mrs. Sanderson's might have detected something like a short, half-repressed sigh.

The first effect of an unsuccessful popping of the question, when the heart is really concerned in the affair, depends greatly upon the disposition and temperament of the party rejected. *One* is subdued to melancholy, *one* excited to rage, *another* driven to madness ; whilst the *very desperate* will threaten to hang, drown, or shoot himself—a threat which he would assuredly carry into execution if anybody were foolish enough to say “Don’t.” But there is one consequence of a love disappointment that affects all natures, which is, that for a time it takes away the appetite ; and so general is this, that we think it not improbable that it would spoil even a common-councilman for a turtle-feast.

Of this fact Quiddy appears to have been aware ; for when, by Mrs. Sanderson's desire, Janet went to call him to supper (which she did with a faltering voice, addressing him, not as heretofore, by his Christian name, but as Mr. Quiddy), he made no reply to her, but, passing through the little back-parlour, said to the old woman (in order to give the semblance of sincerity to his passion)—

“Oh, ma'am ! no supper for me : you've took away my appetite for one while.” And with a grunt which he intended for a sigh of the first magnitude, he betook himself supperless to bed.

Of this Mrs. Sanderson took no notice, but desired Janet to sit down and eat her supper, unconscious that the poor girl had any notion of what had just occurred between herself and her enamoured swain.

Now, according to the theory we have broached touching the loss of appetite, under the circumstances narrated, it will be taken for granted that Janet, who

really felt "the pangs of despised love," declined her meal. No such thing : Janet was, in her small way, a heroine. She knew that, by so doing, she would excite the attention of Mrs. Sanderson, and that the emotion which she could not altogether suppress would be observed ; so she took her supper as usual, but with this slight difference, that every morsel she swallowed went nigh to choke her.

She talked too : she did not, indeed, lead conversation nor ask questions, but she answered those of her companion with apparent cheerfulness. And whenever Mrs. Sanderson looked up at Janet, she saw a smile upon her countenance ; but Mrs. Sanderson being, as we have before intimated, purblind, she did *not* see the tear that accompanied it, the tear that would not be restrained : she did not, in short, observe that most pathetic expression of which the human countenance is susceptible—when the compulsory smile is upon it, whilst the heart is full of grief.

Supper ended, they went each to her bed, and, upon bidding "good-night," the old woman, kissing Janet, added, "God bless you, my child."

Though invariably kind to the girl, this was a term of endearment she had never before addressed to her. The heroism of the little maid-of-all-work was not proof against this : she burst into tears and rushed into her chamber. This little incident was not lost upon the old woman.

And the poor, love-lorn, grief-stricken Quiddy ?—For a full hour did he sit gloomily in the corner of his room, nor had he removed one single article of his dress. He sat like one absorbed in the meditation of some dreadful deed. He drew a small clasp knife from his pocket—then replaced it—muttering to himself, "I shall find a larger knife *there*." Occasionally he rose and listened ; and when all in the house was perfectly quiet, he stealthily descended the stairs to the kitchen. He opened a closet in which he knew that

a weapon such as he had occasion for, would be found ; he seized it ; and imagine, when, next morning, poor Janet approached the same depository, what must have been her feelings as she exclaimed,—

“What *can* have become of such a quantity of the bread-and-cheese !”

CHAPTER III.

Night-cogitations and Resolutions—A notable Contrivance—A Perplexing Proceeding—A Question for an F.R.S.—A Word touching “Fine” Writing—Our Hero a Somnambulist—Awful Disappointment.

DURING the night in question neither of the parties slept much : they lay awake reflecting upon the circumstances of the past evening, each building there-upon a resolution for the future. Janet, indeed, with an industry to which we have before alluded, had formed two : one of which she determined to abide by at all risks ; whilst the other she intended to leave conditional upon the sanction of her benefactress (for such did Janet truly consider Mrs. Sanderson to be) for its fulfilment. What their several resolutions were, and whether they *were* abided by, will presently be seen ; but that all parties were sincere in them is certain—for these ignorant people knew nothing of the true philosophy of the subject, which teaches us that a resolution is chiefly valuable for the pleasure it affords us in breaking it.

The consequence of their night-cogitations was, that when the trio met at breakfast, their demeanour towards each other was somewhat different from what it had heretofore been. Thus, Janet appeared to combine a little more of affection with her habitual respect for the old woman, whilst towards Quiddy she was rather distant and reserved, exhibiting less of her

former unhesitating frankness in her address to him ; though, in neither case, was her altered manner so strongly marked as would have struck any but an observant eye. Mrs. Sanderson, instead of addressing Janet by name, as had been usual with her, called her "my dear ;" whilst to Quiddy she scarcely spoke a word, and seemed purposely to avoid looking at him. As for the young lover, he ever and anon cast (what he intended for) a tender look at the mistress, at the same time emitting a small grunt ; whilst to the maid he was morose—evidently considering her as the bar to the fulfilment of his selfish project.

The resolution which Quiddy had formed in the course of the preceding night was to persist in his endeavour to obtain the old woman's hand ; but, since his overt attack had failed, to try what could be effected by stratagem. He determined, therefore, to play upon her sympathy and fears, and the manner in which he intended to assail them he considered as a masterpiece of invention.

But here again he reckoned without his host, betraying equal ignorance of the character he had to deal with, and the real value of his own little powers. Address is one thing, small cunning another ; and Quiddy, like most people of his stamp, who pride themselves upon being what is termed "'cute," possessed abundance of the latter quality without one particle of the other.

"Eat your breakfast," said Mrs. Sanderson to Quiddy, who put aside the tea and toast which Janet placed before him.

"Ah, ma'am !" said Quiddy, in a doleful tone, "I am not in a state of mind to think of eating."

"If you don't eat, you'll be ill," said Janet, hesitatingly.

Had Quiddy instructed her what to say, she could have said nothing more suitable to his purpose. Unconsciously she played directly into his hand. He

shook his head mournfully and grunted a sigh. Mrs. Sanderson was silent.

"No supper last night! no breakfast this morning!" continued Janet.

Mrs. Sanderson looked queerly at the loaf and the butter, which she thought to be unaccountably curtailed of their fair proportions, considering the fact just noticed by Janet; whilst Quiddy, putting his handkerchief to his eyes, rose and went into the shop, saying—"The sooner I'm out of this world the better, for I've nothing in it now worth living for."

This exclamation, as well as the whole of his conduct, he thought would be intelligible to Mrs. Sanderson only; unaware as he was, that Janet had accidentally become possessed of his secret.

"A sad affair, indeed!" muttered Mrs. Sanderson, drily.

Shortly after breakfast, Mrs. Sanderson, who was too infirm to walk, desired Janet to fetch a hackney-coach.

Janet obeyed, wondering, by the way, what could be the cause of so unusual an order, the old woman not having quitted the house for the last ten months, or since about two months after the death of her husband. On her return, she found Mrs. Sanderson prepared for her journey.

"Before you go out, ma'am," said Janet, hesitatingly, "I—I have something to say, and—" She paused.

"Well, Janet, what is it?"

"There is something that weighs heavily on my—" She had nearly said "heart," but she suppressed the word, and substituted "mind," and continued—"Last night I made a resolution; I am sure it is for the best, and—"

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Sanderson, "I haven't time to listen to you now; I am going out, for two or three hours, about a matter of consequence. I dare say we shall be left to ourselves after supper: tell me then."

Janet assisted her into the coach, which drove away at the break-neck pace (for such it was for such a vehicle in those days) of two miles an hour. *Now*, in these times of improvement, a hackney-coach will sometimes accomplish three—and do it with ease.

But if Janet wondered at this event, Quiddy was utterly confounded by it.

"Where *can* she be *going*?" thought he. "What *can* she be going *about*? I dare say Janet knows."

"Janet," said he, aloud, "what's the old 'oman gone out about?"

"It wasn't my business to inquire, Phineas," replied she, mildly.

She sighed, and went into the house to her work.

"I'll make it out, somehow or other," muttered Quiddy. "It can't be about no good, I'll answer for it."

At the expiration of three hours Mrs. Sanderson returned—but not in the same coach. From this circumstance Quiddy sagaciously inferred, that wherever she might have been, her visit had been long, and the distance short; nor was this inference weakened by his observing that she gave the driver no more than a shilling for her ride.

What is the reason why hackney-coachmen have less alacrity in their movements than other functionaries? Is it the quantity of beer they drink that renders them lumbering and heavy? or the sedentary lives they lead, being for hours together motionless on their seats, whereby they acquire a sort of physical rust? or (which is the most probable explanation of the phenomenon) is it the consequence of the pernicious example they have constantly before their eyes, in their own stiff-jointed and unwilling hacks? Leaving the question as a subject for a "paper" to some retired ignoramus of a linendraper, or greengrocer, or brushmaker, who is allowed by the Royal Society to do honour to British science in the eyes of Europe, by purchasing

of them the distinguished privilege of tacking F.R.S. to his name, we will merely state, that while Coachee was slowly turning up with his left hand the right skirt of his heavy coat; slowly unbuttoning his breeches-pocket; slowly putting his right hand down into it, till it reached nearly to his knee, and there depositing his shilling; slowly rebuttoning the pocket, and slowly putting his foot on the nave of the forewheel of his coach—whilst he was occupied in doing all this, Mrs. Sanderson had time to regain her little back-parlour, and take her seat.

Quiddy availed himself of the opportunity afforded by the delay to question Coachee.

But Coachee, having probably been cautioned against answering questions, and being, moreover, like many of his class, a wag in a certain way, the questioner “took nothing by his motion.”

“I say, Coachee,” said the latter, “you warn’t the man as took up here three hours ago?”

“No,” replied the other, “and for a most uncommon reason.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed Quiddy; “and what may that be?”

“’Cause it *ware* somebody *ilse*.”

“I don’t want none of your jokes,” said Quiddy, somewhat angrily; “I want to know where you fetched the old lady from, as you just set down here?”

Coachee, having by this time mounted his box, answered, while adjusting the flaps of his coat about his knees, and gathering up the reins—

“I’m almost ashamed to tell you, for it *ware* such a cruel queer place!”

Quiddy pricked up his ears and looked all attention.

“May I never drink again,” continued Coachee, “if it warn’t from a house with a door to it. So you see, master, you arn’t got all the snuff in the world in your own shop, for I’m up to a little.” So saying, away drove the wit.

Quiddy, annoyed at the result of his inquiries, resumed his post behind the counter ; his feelings being something akin to those of some patriotic M.P., who, " seeing the noble lord at the head of the —— department in his place, takes the opportunity of putting a question of vital importance at the present crisis ;" to which he receives an answer quite as much to the point, and fully as satisfactory, as Coachee's to *his* interrogator.

Quiddy's head was distracted by guesses, surmises, and conjectures, as to what could have been the object of Mrs. Sanderson's unusual visit abroad ; but all to no purpose. We, of course, are in the secret ; but, for the present, are not at liberty to disclose more of it, than that she went out for the purpose of carrying *her* resolution into effect, and that she did so to its fullest extent. What was its precise object, since she thought proper to conceal it, we are too discreet to explain.

At two o'clock, their usual dinner-hour, Janet called Quiddy to—We pause to apologize.

The station in life of the parties we are engaged with, precludes us from the employment of numberless ornamental phrases and expressions which *tell* with such wonderful effect when the world of fashion is the subject : we therefore are not allowed to speak of the "banquet being served," or the "spacious and brilliantly illuminated dining-room ;" of the "groaning board," or of "delicacies of the season ;" of "viands which would have satisfied the palate of an Apicius," or of "wines for which the gods would willingly have exchanged their nectar." This assuredly is all very fine in its place ; but we dare not here venture upon so lofty a flight as "dinner was announced." No, our phrase must be humble as our theme ; for, as Hamlet's instruction to the players to "suit the action to the word, the word to the action," is founded on good sense and sound judgment ; so, and upon the same grounds, do we hold it right to suit the style to the subject. Such

narrators, however, who think it a very fine thing to be "fine," even upon the meanest subject, have doubtless equally good reason for their practice.

Well, then ; at two o'clock, their usual dining-hour, Janet simply said to Quiddy, "Phineas, dinner's ready."

The repast consisted of the cold remains of a leg of mutton ; and as Mrs. Sanderson, with the practised eye of an old housekeeper, dim though it were, perceived, the instant the joint was placed upon the table, that it had considerably diminished in size since yesterday ; and reflected, moreover, that it could not have become so much smaller by any act of its own, she was neither astonished nor alarmed when Quiddy *again* pleaded the state of his mind as the reason for declining his food.

At tea-time the same game was played, and again at supper.

Janet having left the room, the old woman, with a semblance of feeling, thus addressed her disconsolate swain :—

"Phineas, you are behaving very foolishly ; do you intend to starve yourself to death ? You generally play a very good part at table : you are as fond of eating as any one I ever happened to meet with ; yet here you haven't tasted a morsel since yesterday's dinner. You'll make yourself ill."

"What *does* it signify, ma'am ?" said Quiddy ; "after what you said to me last night I have no wish to live."

"Don't talk so, Phineas," said Mrs. Sanderson : "you are young, and will doubtless find some one who can return your affection."

"Oh, ma'am," exclaimed he, "I shall never love again ; and if you are cruel—"

"Well, well," said Mrs. Sanderson. "But here comes Janet ; say no more now ; go to bed ; a night's rest will do you good ; and, as to-morrow will be

Sunday, you need not get up very early in the morning."

Quiddy took her hand, which he tenderly pressed; looked unutterable things, and, with a deep sigh, betook himself (not immediately to his bed, but) to his bedroom—chuckling inwardly at what he considered to be the complete success of this portion of his scheme, and anticipating a brilliant result from that which yet remained to be executed.

"My dear," said Mrs. Sanderson to Janet, "go down stairs, put all the eatables into the cupboard, lock the door carefully, and bring me the key."

Janet, having done as she was bid, returned.

"I promised to listen to-night to what you have to say to me," said Mrs. Sanderson, "but upon reflection, we had better leave it till the morning. An unpleasant subject—and such I suspect is yours—ought never to be talked over at night: it is an uneasy pillow to sleep upon; but with a few hours of daylight and occupation before one, the mind has opportunity to settle itself down. So go to bed, child."

"But I have a word to say to you—a confession to make, and I cannot rest till I have done so. I overheard part of your conversation with Phineas last night, and I think it my duty to tell you so."

These words she uttered ingenuously, and without the slightest hesitation.

"I suspected as much," said Mrs. Sanderson.

"But," continued Janet, "it was almost by accident. I would not have my kind mistress think me capable of so mean a thing as to turn eavesdropper."

"You are a good girl, Janet," said the other. "To-morrow I will listen to the rest you have to say."

"At any rate *that's* off my mind, and I feel myself a great deal happier for it," said Janet, cheerfully.

We know not that the hapless lover was a somnambulist, but certain it is, that no sooner did he hear the two chamber-doors close, than, as on the previous

night, he softly groped his way down to the kitchen, and approached the familiar cupboard ; and having, greatly to his disappointment and mortification, assured himself that the door was fast locked, and the key gone—with a sigh, a *real* sigh that seemed to issue from the lowest depth of his empty stomach, and sounding like wind whistling through a hollow cavern—he pensively made his way back again.

CHAPTER IV.

Our Hero's Scheme proceeds prosperously, though but little to his Personal Comfort.

THE next morning (it was Sunday), when Mrs. Sanderson came down to breakfast, she found Janet, thoughtful and melancholy, sitting in a corner of the room. In answer to the inquiry, What ailed her ? Janet replied that there was nothing the matter with herself ; adding,

“But I fear poor Phineas is very ill : for, passing his room-door, I heard him groaning piteously.”

“Poor fellow !” exclaimed Mrs. Sanderson, with an air of concern, “something must be done for him.”

“Hadn't I better carry his breakfast up to him ?” inquired Janet.

“No,” replied the other, “I'll do that, after we have taken our own. But go softly upstairs and lock his door, as gently as you can for fear of disturbing him, poor fellow ! The key is always on the outside.”

Janet obeyed the order, and redescended.

The Sunday morning meal was always distinguished by some rare and exquisite delicacy. Upon this occasion it was fried bacon and eggs, the savoury fumes of which diffused themselves over all the house, penetrating through each cranny and crevice till they saluted

the nostrils of the hungry invalid—for, be it remembered, his last visit to the pantry was a failure. He lay for some time expecting a summons to breakfast ; which, not arriving, a fierce struggle took place between excited appetite and his resolution to carry his notable scheme through to its end. Trusting, however, to the sympathy of the ladies, which he thought would not permit him to lie there and starve, he allowed the latter to prevail.

“There can’t be no manner of doubt,” thought he, “that by this time I’ve made the old woman believe I’m ill for love of her ; I wonder whether she’s talking about me ?”

He rose for the purpose of listening at the stair-head, but was astonished at finding his door locked withoutside. This unprecedented circumstance, however, he construed into what he called “a good sign.”

“It’s all right,” thought he ; “she’s bit, and has locked the door to prevent my being disturbed.”

Mrs. Sanderson seemed purposely to have protracted breakfast considerably beyond the usual time of its duration ; nor was it till more than an hour had elapsed that, rising from table, she exclaimed—

“*Now* I’ll go myself and see how he is. In the meantime, Janet, do you go and fetch Doctor McSquills.” And she hobbled up stairs.

Her first three or four taps at the door, Quiddy pretended not to hear. At length, in a faint voice, he inquired, “Who’s there ?” Having received the information which he did *not* need, and answered in the affirmative Mrs. Sanderson’s inquiry whether she might come in, he adjusted his nightcap in the most interesting and becoming manner imaginable, and summoned up the most pathetic look he could command.

The old woman entered, and drew a chair close to his bedside. After looking at him for a few seconds and shaking her head, she began—

“You are looking very ill, Phineas.”

"I shouldn't wonder, ma'am," replied he, in a voice scarcely audible.

"And do you feel ill?"

"Uncommon, madam."

"You are evidently very weak, very feeble; but that is not extraordinary, considering you haven't taken anything since the day before yesterday at dinner." (So he imagined he had led her to believe.)

"Do you want to kill yourself?" continued she. "Only think! should anything happen to you, what is to become of me? Who will remain to take care of me? But I deserve it; it was my unkindness that brought you to this condition."

"Oh, ma'am! Oh, Mrs. Sanderson!" exclaimed he, emboldened by the tenderness of her manner; "though I say it that shouldn't say it—"

Suddenly recollecting that he was a little too vigorous in utterance for a love-stricken invalid, he abruptly lowered his voice, and continued—

"When I'm dead and gone, there won't be nobody left behind me as will love you half as much as I do."

"Well, well," said she, covering her face, and holding out to him one hand whilst the other she placed across her heavy silver-rimmed spectacles, to conceal, as he fancied, a tear; "Well, well, we will not talk any more of this at present; wait till you are quite well again, and— Ah me! I'm a foolish old woman!"

These last words she uttered as if to herself, rather than as addressed to him, yet just loud enough for him to hear them.

"I've done it," thought he; and he chuckled inwardly at the success of his scheme.

"And now, Phineas, you must do me a favour."

"Favour? What wouldn't I do for you?" said he, squeezing the hand he had taken.

"I know you will be doing yourself a violence; but to oblige me—"

"Anything to oblige you, dear Mrs. Sanderson."

"Well, then, you must take some breakfast. But, as you are not yet *quite* well enough to get up, you shall have it in bed."

Consistently with this scheme, this was a favour he would have refused; but ravenously hungry as he was (for really he had eaten nothing since the dinner he had smuggled nearly four-and-twenty hours before), he, after a faint objection or two, kindly consented to grant it.

"That is very good of you," said Mrs. Sanderson. "And now one thing more: this is my birthday, as you may remember; we have a hot roast goose for dinner; you must exert yourself to come down and eat some."

Quiddy's eyes sparkled, and his lips watered at the mere mention of the object which, of all others, dead or alive (money only excepted), he loved best in all the world. To this again he thought proper at first to offer an objection, knowing full well his objection would be overruled.

"We shall not dine till three o'clock," said Mrs. Sanderson; "remain abed till then: three or four hours' quiet repose will make quite another man of you. And now," said she, rising, "I'll send Janet up with a nice little breakfast for you that won't do you any harm. May I trust to your promise that you will eat it?"

"Solemn, ma'am!" said Quiddy, in a tone and with a look which would have assured the most incredulous of his sincerity.

"But be cautious," continued the considerate old woman, "be very cautious; for, as I said before, you haven't taken food for nearly eight-and-forty hours, so don't eat too much at once: part now and part by and bye; you are still in a very delicate state."

As Mrs. Sanderson opened the door, the odour of fried bacon and eggs again rose excitingly to the olfactory nerves of the sick lover; but there was scarcely need of this to whet the already keen edge of his appetite.

"I've done it," said he, rubbing his hands exultingly, as he heard his fair one making her way down stairs ; "I've done it ! How nicely I have come over her ! Every stick and stiver she has got in the world is mine ! Well, if I arn't a 'cute 'un I'm a Dutchman, that's all."

Presently a gentle tap was heard at the door. Quiddy hastily turned himself in his bed with his face to the wall.

"Come in," said he, reassuming his invalid voice.

"I am glad to hear you are a little better," said Janet, placing his breakfast on the chair at his bedside.

"A little," said he, without turning to look at the speaker.

"Mrs. Sanderson desires you will take your breakfast, and then go to sleep : nobody will disturb you till dinner-time." And having said this, Janet left the room, closed the door, and locked it.

Quiddy listened till the footsteps of Janet were no longer audible, when, eager for his meal, he leaped out of bed. But who shall conceive his disappointment, his dismay, his horror, on perceiving that, instead of the substantials he expected, the breakfast which his considerate friend had provided for him consisted of nothing more than a very weak cup of tea, without either sugar or milk, and two thin slices—*slices* ? no, that word would convey an exaggerated idea of their bulk—two exquisitely fine shavings of bread-and-butter, which seemed to have been pared off the loaf by the delicate application of a carpenter's plane.

For a time he stood motionless, gazing on the awful sight before him ; at length, having in some degree recovered from the terror with which this ghost of a breakfast had inspired him, he rubbed his eyes and shook and scratched his head, as if to assure himself that he was actually awake. But there was no mistake upon that point. What was he to do ? Submit to starvation,

or, by a sudden and premature recovery, endanger the final success of his trick, which, up to this moment, he looked upon as in a prosperous way?

"It is not yet eleven," thought he, "and I have four hours to suffer till dinner-time. Well! I must bear it as I may: it is but once in a way. I have completely come over the old woman by it, that's one comfort; and when I get opposite to the goose, I'll take my revenge upon *that*—and that's another."

Consoling himself with these reflections, he swallowed the provisions set before him—an operation which he found to be neither difficult nor long—and returned to bed. But his "unreal mockery" of a breakfast served rather to increase than allay the pangs of hunger; and as the sweetest tempers are not all proof against the provocations of an empty stomach, his, which certainly could not be reckoned in that class, was irritated in the extreme. Starved almost into repentance of his ingenious expedient, he lay fretting and fuming, tumbling and tossing, in vain endeavouring to sleep away some portion of the fearful four hours which stood between his appetite and his dinner. And in this pleasant condition we will, for the present, leave him, and attend to the ladies in the little back-parlour.

CHAPTER V.

A short Chapter containing a short Confession—A short Digression to Water-works and Tears—Short Direction how to silence a Bore—And a short Apology for another Touch of the Unromantic.

"AND now, my dear, that we are alone," said Mrs. Sanderson to Janet—"By-the-bye, did you lock Phineas's door on the outside?"

Janet replied that she had done so.

"Then, as we are in no danger of interruption, tell

me what is the important affair you desired to speak to me about?"

"Nothing," replied Janet.

"Nothing!" exclaimed Mrs. Sanderson; "I hope you don't mean to say you have been trifling with me?"

"I have not—indeed I have not," said Janet; "when I told you I had something particular to say to you, it was so. The truth is, the night before last I made a resolution; last night I reflected on it and changed it."

"And what was it?" inquired Mrs. Sanderson.

"I had resolved to leave you," replied Janet.

"Leave me! You never could have thought of such a thing. But why? What have I done to cause you even to think of such a step?" said Mrs. Sanderson, with something of displeasure.

"*You* done? You, ma'am, have ever treated me with kindness and affection; but——" Janet paused; her head sank upon her bosom, and a tear stole gently down her cheek.

"Speak on, child," said Mrs. Sanderson, kindly; "speak to me without reserve; trust me; speak to me as to a friend—a mother."

Water for household purposes is sometimes procurable only from a spring, and requires the labour of pumping to get at it; sometimes it is more conveniently brought into the house by means of pipes, and may be had in any quantity, at a moment's notice, upon merely turning a peg. So is it with tears. With some women the lachrymal fount lies deep; others have their tears (to use the language of the water-works) "laid on"—brought up to the corner of their eyes—ready to flow as soon as wanted. In both cases the stream from the deeper source is thought to be the purer.

Now Janet seldom wept. Neither a harsh rebuke, nor any of the little troubles and annoyances to which

she was occasionally subjected would ever draw a tear from her ; nor was she one of those interesting persons who can "get up a cry," whenever an object is to be gained, or an effect produced by it ; all which, by the bye, led the coarse mind of Mr. Quiddy to set her down as "rather an unfeeling creechur." But touch her heart with the rod of kindness, and water gushed from it as from the rock. So (as upon a late occasion) when Mrs. Sanderson had spoken the words we have just recorded, Janet burst into a good, honest cry.

This ebullition Mrs. Sanderson did not attempt to interrupt, well knowing that by allowing her to have her cry fairly out, the sooner it would be over. As with a dull, tiresome, prosing bore, each word of interruption but serves him as a fresh starting-point ; but deprive him of that advantage by listening to him in profound silence, and you will be astonished to find how much sooner he will have exhausted his means of annoyance.

Janet, having recomposed herself, proceeded :—

"I *did* intend to leave you. By accident I overheard some part of Phineas's conversation with you. I never again can be happy under the same roof with him, and that was my reason for resolving to quit this house."

"Do you love him then?" inquired Mrs. Sanderson.

This was a plain question if ever one there were ; and had Janet acted according to the rules for such cases made and provided, she ought, instead of meeting it with a plain reply, to have looked down, or on one side, or on the other side, and twiddled her thumbs—in short, she ought to have looked amazingly silly, and held her tongue. But Janet herself was—alas ! in more than one sense—a plain person ; and as she happened at the time to be looking her interlocutor full in the face, she continued to do so, and simply, and without hesitation, replied, "I do."

Love's vagaries, being vagaries, are not to be ac-

counted for upon any settled principle. We *might* have said, "*De gustibus*," &c. which would have answered our purpose very well. And why did we not? Because we are projecting a Society for the Preventing of Cruelty to Quotations, many of which, poor things! are so inhumanly overworked, that they now and then deserve a holiday. No matter: all we desire is to palliate, as best we can, the choice made by poor Janet, whose taste therein might otherwise suffer in the opinion of those to whom we have introduced her.

Mrs. Sanderson seemed to be reflecting upon those two emphatic words, "I do," for about as long a time as this little digression has occupied, and then said—

"I was sure of it; I have long seen it; and since you are aware of what passed the other night, I do not wonder that you wish to be away from him: you *cannot* be happy here—at least, not as happy as you have been."

"No," said Janet, with a melancholy smile, and a mournful shake of the head.

"Then why, after all, have you changed your mind, and resolved to remain here in spite of your own feelings?"

"Because," replied Janet, "I have reflected that in this world we must consider others' feelings as well as one's own. If I left you, you must take a stranger to you—one who would be long before she understood your wants and wishes as well as I do—perhaps she never would. She would serve you for hire, not for love—a cold substitute, as you soon would find—and *you* would be unhappy. I am young, and better able than you to bear—what must be borne. You have been as a mother to me, and in repaying your kindness with the duty and affection of a daughter, I do just what I ought—and no more."

This was the longest speech Janet had ever delivered in her life, yet (which, in these days of "wholly-unprepared-as-I-am-to-address-you" oratory, is not a little extraordinary) not a line of it had been previously

arranged by herself, or composed for her by another. It fell from her at the spur of the moment, and was all made out of her own—not head, but—heart.

“You are a good girl, Janet,” said Mrs. Sanderson, “a great deal too good for *him*. However, one of these days, perhaps, he may learn to value you as you deserve, and then—”

At these words, Janet rose abruptly from her chair, and looking at the little Dutch clock, which hung in a corner of the room, said,—

“It’s time I should go and stuff the goose.” And away she went.

They who have derived their acquaintance with nature, life, character and manners, from the study of fashionable novels, will probably object that, considering the state of Janet’s heart, and mind, and feelings, we have sent her about a very unromantic occupation. Granted. But what else could we do? We might, indeed, have dismissed her to her tambour-frame; or to the practice of Thalberg’s last grand Sonata, or Madame Persiani’s grand *Scena ed Aria* in the *Lucia*. This, we own, would have been “sweetly pretty,” but it would not have been true; nor even in a fictitious tale (which, we hardly need say, this is not) would it have been in the smallest degree truth-like, however requisite to satisfy the wishes and expectations of the class of readers we have alluded to. For their consolation, however, we can assure them, that when poor ugly little Janet interrupted Mrs. Sanderson’s discourse by abruptly rising to go and thrust sage and onions into a goose, she was moved thereunto by as high-minded a purpose as need have been had we called her the young and lovely Lady Emmelina Rosevalley, and sent her forth to gather violets and primroses. She was, in fact, acting upon the resolution which we have already said she had determined to abide by, but which we may not even yet divulge. The other—that contingent upon the consent or wishes of Mrs. Sanderson—we have just explained.

CHAPTER VI.

A long Chapter, in which a marvellous Cure is performed.

RETURN we now to Quiddy, whom we left half-starved and restless, tumbling and tossing in his bed.

Twelve o'clock! At the end of an hour, which, computed by the gnawings of hunger, appeared to him a day, the clock struck one—only one!

"Yet two hours till dinner-time," muttered Quiddy; "I shall never live to see it."

A *week* elapsed and the clock struck two—only two? Yet another dreadful hour! His resolution began to falter. He started from bed, and approached the door; it was still locked.

"Nobody coming near me! Will they leave me to starve?" thought he.

In the hope of attracting attention, he paced heavily up and down his room, which was immediately over the little back-parlour; but, greatly to his disappointment, his movements were unnoticed.

Again he approached the door, and his sensitive nose detected the delicious odour of the goose which was twirling before the kitchen-fire. This reanimated his courage.

"I'll carry it on to the end," thought he; "I've suffered so long that I'll bear the other hour. I'll not spoil a ship for lack of a ha'p'orth of tar, as the saying is. I've caught the old woman in the trap. It is but another hour, and then comes my reward. Well, I *am* a 'cute 'un, I *must* say."

And with these consoling reflections, he again got into bed.

Alas! for the poor sufferer. The end was further off than he anticipated.

Presently there was a double knock at the street-

door. It was opened. He listened, and, not a little to his alarm, he recognised the voice of Dr. McSquills.

"What!" exclaimed he, in that which must, by this time, have been perceived to be his own elegant vernacular; "what! has she took and sent for the doctor? He'll see with half an eye as there's nothing the matter with me, and then the game's up."

A short conversation passed between Mrs. Sanderson and the doctor, and in a few minutes they were heard ascending the stairs. Quiddy huddled himself up in the bed-clothes, and pretended to sleep. The key turned in the lock, and the pair entered.

"He sleeps, poor fellow!" said Mrs. Sanderson to Doctor McSquills, accompanying the words with a knowing wink, which he significantly returned.

"Quiddy!" said Mrs. Sanderson, in a tone of affected tenderness, and stooping over the pretended sleeper.

He replied not.

"Phineas!—Phineas dear!" continued she, and with increased tenderness.

Still he remained silent.

"I don't like this sleep of his; what think you of it, doctor?" said Mrs. Sanderson.

The doctor, be it premised, was a tall, athletic Scot, who had passed several years of his life in the exercise of his profession at sea, in the merchant-service. He was somewhat of a wag; had a comical twinkle in the eye; and a broad Scotch accent—broad as his own shoulders. One feature, as a late noble orator would probably have called it,—one feature for which he was remarkable was his hand, which was disproportionately large and of immense power;—as an instance of this he could at a single grasp crush a hard ship-biscuit into powder. He had been an old friend of the late Sandy Sanderson; the widow had let him into the secret of Quiddy's pretended illness, and the occasion of it; and a better auxiliary in the affair than Doctor McSquills she could not have found.

"Not like this sleep!" exclaimed the doctor; "on the contrary, it's just the varra best thing for the puir young mon that can be. Nae, nae, just let him sleep his fill. He mustna' be disturbed; and, to prevent accident, I'll lock the door, put the key into my ain pocket, and tak' it awa wi' me. Let him sleep, I say; and to-night—the varra last thing before I go to bed—I'll look in again, and see how he's getting on."

At this fearful intimation a chill ran through the very marrow of Mr. Quiddy; he shivered from head to foot, and thought it high time to be wide awake.

"Who's there?" inquired he, in a low tone.

"'Tis I, and Dr. McSquills," replied Mrs. Sanderson.

"I'm varra sorry to see you in this state," said the doctor, taking a chair at the bedside. "Come, let me feel your pulse."

Quiddy, apprehensive of detection, reluctantly held out his hand.

"This is nae affection o' the bodie," said the doctor, after a few moments' reflection; "he has nae bodily ailment; it is the mind, Mrs. Sanderson, the mind. The puir young man has something that presses sairly at his heart."

Mrs. Sanderson sighed; and Quiddy, now feeling assured of the ultimate success of his scheme, ventured a tender look at her.

"Come, now, mak' confidants of Mrs. Sanderson and me," continued the doctor; "just tell us what it is that distresses you. Remember we are your friends, so speak out."

Mrs. Sanderson interposed, and requested the doctor, for *her* sake, not to press him upon that point—not, at least, for the present.

"As you wull," said McSquills; "but remember, that though there be no bodily ailment just noo, I'll no answer for what may come o' it. The patient must be treated with the greatest care and attention, and kindness, and—but I say, my young friend, I'm told

you are fule enough to refuse your food. That mustna' be. Have you eaten onything to-day ?"

Mrs. Sanderson answered for him, and described the "nice, delicate little breakfast" with which she had supplied him.

"Wishy-washy tea !" exclaimed the doctor ; "water bewitched ! Is that the breakfast to give a sick mon ? Is it wi' sic trash ye'd keep the body and soul o' a mon thegither ? I'll gar him swallow something a wee bit better than that for his dinner, or my name's not Archie McSquills. How's your appetite, mon ?"

"I think I feel as if I could come down and pick a bit," replied Quiddy.

"You *shall* pick a bit," said the doctor, "but there'll be nae coming doon for you to-day. You must ha' your dinner sent up, and must tak' it in bed—and I'll just bring it to you mysel'."

"You shall, doctor," said Mrs. Sanderson, "for I can't persuade him to take his meals. And doctor," continued she, "if you can make a dinner of hot roast goose and apple-pie, and put up with a tumbler of whisky-toddy afterwards, I shall be glad of your company. This is my birthday, and I have asked a neighbour or two to come in the evening and eat the cold remains. Besides, you will be better able to look to poor Phineas."

"There's nae harm that I ken o' in *hot* roast goose," replied the doctor, "and mickle guid in whisky-toddy ; so I'm e'en wi' you, widow ; but as a professional mon, I maun just tell you I canna, in conscience, recommend cold goose for supper : it's the deil's ain bairn for indigestion." And drawing in his breath, and emitting it again with a sound something between a hiss and a whistle, he added, "However, it's ae comfort to think that what the neebors are like to see o' the puir birdie cold after Archie McSquills has looked at it hot and reeking from the fire, wont do them ony injury to fash about."

"But your patient, doctor?" said Mrs. Sanderson, with an air of concern.

"I'll no conceal it," replied the doctor, "he's varra ill, but he'll be greatly better after he has had his dinner. Don't you think so yoursel', Meester Queddy?"

"Certain sure of it, doctor," replied the latter.

"And now, Meester Queddy, just gi' me your hand."

Quiddy extended his hand, which McSquills seized in his huge right fist, shaking it, and tightening his grasp at every pause in his speech, till the water streamed from poor Quiddy's eyes.

"Meester Queddy," said the doctor, gravely, "ye're varra ill—ye'll be a wee bit better for your dinner;—but—if by to-morrow morning—I don't mak ye as weel as ever ye were in your life—I'll consent—to forfeit—my professional—reputation—Meester—Queddy."

Hereupon the doctor and Mrs. Sanderson left the room, the former locking the door, and putting the key into his pocket.

"I'll just step home and get something that may be needfu' for our puir invalid," said the doctor, "and be back again in guid time to pay my respects to the goose. And Janet——"

He whispered something in the way of an instruction to Janet, which she promised punctually to obey.

In due time the doctor returned; dinner was served, and he, the widow, and Janet, placed themselves at table—the visitor taking upon himself by far the largest share of the labour of making the goose "look remarkably fulish," as he expressed it.

Dinner ended, and the doctor having taken his last pull at a pot of Scotch ale, he rose, observing that it was now time to give "Meester Queddy" his dinner, and desired Janet to follow him up stairs with it.

The condition of the invalid, who passed an hour in listening to the clatter of knives and forks (his impatience aggravated by the tantalizing odour of his

favourite bird) may—to use a phrase which is not of the newest—be better conceived than described. At length, greatly to his satisfaction, he heard the approaching footsteps of McSquills. His mouth watered by anticipation of what he was about to enjoy.

The doctor entered the room and took a seat.

“Weel, Meester Queddy, and how d’ye find yoursel’ by this time, mon? I hope ye’re in a condition to enjoy your dinner?”

“Dying for it, doctor,” eagerly replied Quiddy.

“An angel of a goose!” exclaimed the doctor; “done to a turn, and the stuffing like a nosegay. Janet’s a braw lassie, and—but here she comes wi’ your dinner, so sit up in bed, mon, and prepare for it.”

Janet appeared, bringing with her a huge basin, covered with a plate, in which lay two rusks.

“That’s weel, Janet; put it on yonder table, bring the table to the bedside, and leave me alone wi’ my patient.”

Janet did as she was told. At the same time McSquills took from his pocket a pill-box, and a phial filled with an ugly-coloured liquid, both of which he placed beside the basin.

“What’s that?” cried Quiddy, with mingled astonishment and horror, as the doctor removed the plate from the basin, and discovered about a quart of thin water-gruel.

“Your dinner,” coolly replied the doctor; “some nice wholesome water-gruel, without sugar or spice (for sic condiments would be bad for your complaint), and twa delicate wee rusks.”

“*That my dinner?*” said, or rather screamed, the famished invalid.

“Thae fulish women!” said the doctor, not replying to this question, but deliberately stirring the gruel, “thae fulish women! to gie a sick body wishy-washy tea, when there’s siccan a thing to be had as guid com-

fortable gruel. Then, they'd ha' gone as far wide o' the mark the ither way : they'd ha' sent you Lord knows what quantity of the goose, whilk would ha' gone nigh to be the death o' you, if I had not providentially been here to prevent it. And noo, Meester Queddy, eat your dinner."

"Doctor ! doctor !" said Quiddy, imploringly, "don't make me swallow that horrid stuff ; I'm better, much better, and feel my appetite returning."

"I ken it weel, right weel," said the doctor ; "I just expected to hear you say so ? it is ane of the remarkable symptoms of your case. But this is aw ye'll be gettin' this blessed day ; so lap it up, mon, lap it up."

"Oh, doctor !" continued Quiddy, "do you wish to kill me ?"

"Just the contrary," replied the other ; "I intend to cure you : I have staked my professional reputation upon making a sound mon o' ye by the morning, and I'll do it ! Come, leave your wry faces and eat your gruel."

"It's stuff I never could abide ; I can't take it, and I won't," said Quiddy, resolutely. "Anything but that I would have taken."

"Weel, weel," said McSquills, "I can mak' great allowance for the delicate stomach o' a sick mon, so I have provided a little variety—a choice for you, my guid friend."

He opened the pill-box, drew the cork from the phial, and added, "Ye'll just please to swallow thae three blue pills, and, to prevent their sticking i' your throat, here's a comfortable black draught to wash 'em down wi'."

Quiddy started up on the bed, and throwing himself on his knees, cried, "Doctor McSquills—my dear doctor—listen to me—I'll confess everything to you—I'm not in the least—"

"Meester Queddy," said the doctor, putting his huge arm across the chest of the former, and throwing

him down on his back upon the bed ; “Meester Queddy, I have nothing to do wi’ your confessions ; I’m no a parson, but a doctor. All I have to do is to cure you ; so—come—choose your dinner, and quickly, for I want to go down to my whisky-toddy.”

Quiddy was about to remonstrate, when McSquills, rising to his full height, and grasping him by the shoulder, which he pressed till he made the very tips of Quiddy’s fingers tingle, firmly and deliberately addressed these words to him :—

“Hark ye, Meester Queddy, I’m no to be trifled wi’ ; I am a professional mon ; you complained of being varra ill, and I was sent for to cure you. I ken as weel as you do what ails you, and mickle better than you do how to treat your complaint. Noo—ye’ll tak’ either the gruel or the physic before twa minutes are past—nac mair—” [He drew his watch from his fob, and held it in his hand]—“or, by St. Andrew I swear, I’ll just brak every bone i’ your bodie !”

Resistance was in vain, so Quiddy set to with the best grace he could to swallow the gruel (that being a little less repugnant to his taste than the pills and the potion), the doctor encouraging him by occasionally exclaiming, “That’s right, mon, lap it up, lap it up.”

“That’s my braw lad !” cried the doctor, who over-looked his patient till he had taken the last spoonful. “It’s half-past four : I’m thinking ye’ll no be wanting onything mair till supper-time—indeed, ye’ll no get onything mair if you should—so I’ll pay you another visit at half-past ten, just before I go away ; and I ha’ some hope that by the morning ye’ll be all weel again. So noo I’ll go down to my whisky-toddy.”

Saying which, the doctor quitted the room, locked the door, and again put the key into his pocket.

Having, with ludicrous gravity, assured the widow, in reply to her inquiry concerning the “poor sufferer” (which Janet seconded with her looks), that he was so far out of danger that they need not “fash” themselves

about him, but, on the contrary, might make themselves perfectly easy and comfortable; he proceeded to assist towards that desirable end by mixing for the party a jug of the promised beverage. Soon the expected guests arrived; and the evening, which was terminated by supper, passed off merrily—the doctor being the life and soul of the company.

Janet, indeed, contributed nothing to the general stock of mirth, and partook but little in it. In addition to her own personal grief, which was yet fresh at her heart, she was uneasy at Quiddy's illness, of the reality of which she entertained not the slightest doubt; thinking (poor simple-minded girl!) that it was no more possible for a person to *act* a deliberate lie, than to *tell* one.

Now and then she approached McSquills, and asked him, in a whisper, whether she had not better go up and see if Phineas wanted anything; to which the doctor's reply invariably was, "Bide where ye are, lassie, and leave aw that to me."

But how was it, during all this time, in the sick chamber? Quiddy, with six dismal hours before him—(for the doctor's resolute conduct and imperturbable manner had convinced him that he had no mercy to expect at his hands, or the abbreviation by even a poor five minutes of the period appointed for his next visit)—Quiddy, we say, had plenty of time for reflection, the result of which was a keen suspicion that his masterly stratagem was a dead failure. He could scarcely doubt that the shrewd Scot had seen through the trick; nor, when he heard the lady of his love joining in the loud and frequent laugh below, was he without some disagreeable misgivings that her lately expressed concern for his indisposition was about as genuine as that indisposition itself.

As evening drew in, darkness added to the discomforts of his situation; and when at length the clattering of knives, forks, and plates, intimated that

preparations were afoot for supper, he could endure it no longer: the contrast of the pleasures and enjoyments of the party below with his own sufferings—his now *real* sufferings—was intolerable. He bitterly repented of his “amazing cleverness,” which had led to consequences so miserably different from those upon which he had calculated, and resolved at once to confess his imposture and beg for mercy. With this intention he leapt out of bed, and set to thumping at the door, calling alternately upon Mrs. Sanderson, Janet, and the doctor, to come and liberate him. But he thumped and called in vain. Enraged at this neglect, he redoubled the noise. After a time, he thought he heard some one coming up stairs. He paused to listen. It was McSquills. McSquills gave a gentle tap at the door, and, in an under-voice, said—

“Meester Queddy—Meester Queddy—if *you happen to be awake*, this is to inform you that it is no but nine o’clock. I promised to bring you your supper at half-past ten, and will keep my word to the varra minute. Noo, if you happen to be awake, take the advice of your friend and physeecian, and go patiently asleep till then. I’ll just assure you it will be aw the better for you. So, hoping I mak myself intelligible, good night for the present—Meester—Queddy.”

Quiddy, who had already sufficient experience of the hopelessness (to say nothing of the danger) of refusing compliance with the advice of his hard-fisted “friend and physeecian,” “thought it both safest and best” to take his hint; so he sulkily threw himself down on his bed, and there lay “chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancies,” till his appointed supper-time.

Punctual to the minute, at half-past ten, Doctor McSquills returned to his patient. He silently took his seat, and placed a lighted candle, together with the fearful phial and pill-box, upon the table.

“Weel, my guid friend, and how do you find yoursel’ by *this time*?” was his first kind inquiry.

Quiddy, who had resolved to try whether a change of tactics would tend to the amelioration of his unhappy condition, at once replied that he felt himself considerably better—perfectly well, indeed, except that he was faint “for want of his wittles,” as he expressed it.

“Exactly what I expected,” said McSquills; “and I’m happy to tell you that’s a varra favourable symptom, varra—one of the certain results o’ my system. Come, let me feel your pulse. Ha! it’s aw right, and I can tell exactly what your sensations are. In the first place you feel—noo, dinna attempt to deceive me, but answer truly—you feel nae sort o’ inclination for sic anither mess o’ gruel for your supper, as I gar’d you swallow for your dinner?”

“I could not even bear the sight of it, doctor,” replied Quiddy, shuddering.

“Anither o’ the results o’ my system, and a varra favourable symptom also. I’ve provided your supper accordingly. In the second place,” continued McSquills, gravely, and still keeping his fingers on his patient’s pulse, “in the second place, you feel your appetite a wee bit improved.”

“Vastly, doctor,” was the reply.

“Anither o’ the results of my system, and a favourable symptom again. In short, Meester Queddy, you feel as if you could almost devour the hard egg, and the wee bit o’ dry toastec, and the cup o’ milk-and-water, that—and here comes Janet wi’ it. That’s weel, lassie; put it on the table, and leave us. This is something better than gruel, hech, sir? Little by little we get on, you observe; and I have great hopes that to-morrow morning ye’ll just be weel enough to go doon and open the shop, and attend to your business, and mak as guid a breakfast as at any time before your present alarming indisposition.”

“Doctor,” said Quiddy (the tears forced from his eyes by vexation and disappointment), “I’m well *now*,

as well as ever I was in my life ; and, if I'm to have nothing more than this till the morning, I shall——”

“Haud your tongue, mon, haud your tongue ; wad you have me be the death of ye by overloading your stomach on a sudden. Slow and sure, Meester Queddy. Plague, mon ! wad you pretend to know better than the doctor what's guid for your complaint ? This is all I shall allow you to-night ; so come, sir, choose your supper, and quickly, for it's getting late.”

These words the doctor accompanied with a significant glance at the phial and pill-box.

Quiddy, as a last hope, roared out, “Doctor, doctor, I had better confess than be starved. I am not ill ; I have been well from the first ; I have deceived you, and——”

“Nae, nae, mon, dinna insist upon that, if you have ony regard for your personal comfort, or I'll no leave you a whole bone i' your skin, e'en were they all made of iron pokers. You are a 'cute bairn, Meester Queddy, but not quite siccan a conjuror as to deceive old Archie McSquills. So come, quick, to your supper.”

It was evident to Quiddy that his medical adviser would take no denial ; so of the choice of delicacies presented to him, he decided for—we need hardly say *not* those of the doctor's own preparing.

Having waited till Quiddy had finished his meal—a work that required no very long time—

“That's weel,” said the doctor, rising, and taking up the candle. “And noo, Meester Queddy, let me once more remind you, I have undertaken to cure you of your present ailment by to-morrow morning. I shall pay you a visit at nine o'clock ; and if I find that my present system is too mild by itself, I shall back it wi' a leetle pheesicking, bleeding, and blistering, and we shall see what virtue there is in that. So, guid night, and pleasant dreams to you—Meester—Queddy.”

The doctor reported progress to the widow, and delivered to her the key of the invalid's door, which

he had locked "for fear," as he gravely expressed himself, "for fear the puir fellow should walk i' the night, and help himself at the cupboard, to the manifest detriment o' my system;" adding, "And if, after the hint I ha'e gi'en him of the leetle variety I intend in my treatment of his case, I don't find him weel enough i' the morning to eat my old boots for his breakfast rather than undergo it, I'll consent to pass for a quack aw the rest o' my life. And so guid night, widow; guid night, lassie."

Quiddy was a young gentleman of exquisite sensibility—a "man of feeling;" and had there been no other human creature in the world besides himself, he might have been called, in the most extensive sense of the word, a philanthropist—a lover of all mankind. But, unluckily for his claim to that title, matters were not so ordered: there were millions in the world besides Phineas Quiddy; and as the range of his sympathies was limited to a circle so small as to admit within it nobody but Phineas Quiddy himself—no fault of his, perhaps—we may be justified, under these circumstances, in setting him down as a thoroughly selfish rascal.

How intense, therefore, upon this occasion, was his sympathy with himself; how acutely he felt the—— But, as we entertain no respect for those tastes that delight in the description of suffering, whether mental or bodily, wound up to the highest pitch of endurance, we will not gratify them by detailing the sufferings of Quiddy during another long night of privation and unrest—they being aggravated by vexation to think that he was the dupe and the victim of his own clever contrivance.

At seven o'clock Janet knocked at his door. She was the bearer of an inquiry from Mrs. Sanderson, whether he was anything better, and a recommendation from the considerate old lady, that, if not, he would keep his room for another day—she undertaking, with the

assistance of Janet, to get through the business of the shop. But Quiddy was happy to inform them that he was so well that he should be quite ashamed to put either of them to so much trouble; and declared that, if Janet would unlock the door, he would be down stairs in that short period of time which he graphically designated "a jiffy." Janet, accordingly, did unlock the door, and Quiddy dressed himself and descended to his duties.

When breakfast was ready, Mrs. Sanderson came down, and took her place at the table. Quiddy being called, entered the room, and (looking pale, haggard, and exceedingly sheepish), slunk, or we might almost say, shrunk into his chair.

"Phineas," said the old woman, "I'm glad to see you down again. Considering what you have suffered, you are looking charmingly, I declare. There is a little broiled bacon for you: if you feel yourself well enough to pick a bit, do;" (adding, with a sneer) "if not, there's more gruel in the house, my dear."

Phineas, confused and abashed, mumbled something which was received as an intimation of his preference for the former: and instantly upon its being placed before him, he attacked it with a vigour that proved, that whatever might have been the case with respect to his illness, his hunger was not feigned.

As the clock struck nine, faithful to his promise, there was Dr. McSquills. Just bobbing his head by way of salutation, but saying nothing, he drew from his pockets, and displayed on the table, a case of lancets, three large phials neatly wrapped in paper, a box of pills, and two blisters of ample dimensions, the very sight of which caused Mr. Quiddy to feel a tingling all over his chest and shoulders.

"And noo, Meester Queddy, how do you feel yoursel' by *this* time?"

"Well, sir, *quite* well," eagerly replied the other,

and trembling from head to foot ; " I have no need of any of that 'ere."

" I'm right glad o' it," said the doctor, " for it saves me some trouble and yoursel' no little inconvenience. You see I am true to my word, and prepared for the worst. And yet," continued he, drily, and taking up one of the blisters, " I'm just thinking that for fear of a relapse, there'd be nae muckle harm, but on the contrary, some possible guid in—"

Quiddy interrupted the doctor, by assuring him in the most positive terms, that there was nothing of that kind to be apprehended, for that the kind and skilful treatment he had already received at his hands had made a man of him again ; and in his opinion he was supported by Mrs. Sanderson, who expressed her opinion that Phineas, having made a *tolerable* breakfast, had no further need of his assistance.

" Aw the better, aw the better—for the patient I mean," replied McSquills ; and whilst speaking, he quietly replaced his various remedies in his pocket.

" And noo, Meester Queddy, I've to say that I'm mightily puzzled aboot the nature of your late distemper. I never met with the like o't in the whole course of my experience. But it has this point about it in common with the sma'pox ; that, as I flatter mysel' I have worked it radically out o' your system, ye'll be no likely to be takin' it again in a hurry. So, guid-by—Meester—Queddy."

With a wink to the widow, and a nod to Janet, Doctor McSquills departed ; and the chapfallen lover proceeded to his avocations behind the counter.

" I think we have cured him of his foolery of dying of love for his grandmother," muttered the widow, as Quiddy left the room ; and he, who heard the words, made up his mind from that moment to abandon the pursuit, and never to repeat the experiment.

CHAPTER VII.

Sheer Industry prospers—Ominous Visit—A clear Case of “Pumping”—A Mystery solved—A Digression for the Benefit of Younger Sons—A *very* confidential Communication.

SOME months had now passed away, during which the members of this interesting family (whatever might have been their real and individual feelings) conducted themselves towards each other precisely as they had done previously to Quiddy’s unsuccessful declaration to Mrs. Sanderson.

Disappointed in his matrimonial scheme of increasing his possessions, Quiddy applied himself with redoubled activity to business ; more particularly to that portion of it—by far the larger and more profitable one—which consisted in assisting his needy friends and neighbours with small loans of money. Of this Mrs. Sanderson was ignorant, as her late husband had been ; and it being Quiddy’s own original invention, he thought himself justified in keeping the profits of it entirely to himself. Those profits were now not inconsiderable ; for as the means of our capitalist increased, he extended the sphere of his financial operations, and enlarged their amount. He would lend, at fair legal interest, fifty—nay, such was his benevolence ! even a hundred pounds to a small tradesman in distress, requiring nothing more than a deposit of property worth thrice as much, for his security, and (what he called) a *dowser* for the use of his money. This dowser, or *douceur*, was made to vary with circumstances, from twenty to thirty *per cent.* ; and it must be said, in Quiddy’s commendation, that he seldom bargained for more—unless he thought he could get it.

Including his share of the stock of rappee and pig-

tail, young Quiddy, who had had the good fortune to begin the world with nothing, might now be set down as worth a round thousand pounds—considerably more than the amount and value of all the earthly possessions of his predecessor after forty years of foolish equitable trading.

When Law, Physic, and Divinity are all at once busy about a house, it is pretty clear that something uncomfortable is going on therein. So was it at Widow Sanderson's. The old lady, who for several weeks had been confined to her room, and for the last three of them to her bed, received visits, on the same evening, from her doctor, her attorney, and the parson of the parish. Yet there was no immediate danger ; for Dr. McSquills had assured her that she *might* linger on for months—taking care, however, like a cautious prognosticator, to hedge his opinion with a trifling qualification—or that she *might* go out like the snuff of a candle. Under these circumstances the patient thought it prudent to be prepared at all points for the worst ; so she sent for her lawyer, Mr. Grubb, to set her mind at ease touching her worldly affairs ; and having dismissed him, devoted the remainder of the evening to matters of still graver importance with the Reverend Job Fag, curate of the parish.

As the lawyer was descending the stairs to give place to the divine, he was invited by Quiddy into the little back parlour.

"Walk in, Mr. Grubb, will you ?" said Quiddy.

The lawyer made no reply, but entered.

"You and me haven't had a chat for a *very* long time," said Quiddy.

"No," said Grubb, drily.

"Come—sit down, Mr. Grubb," said Quiddy, taking a seat, and pointing to a chair on the opposite side of the fireplace ; "sit down ; sitting is quite as cheap as standing."

This observation was accompanied with a small chuckle, indicating the consciousness of the speaker that he had uttered a witticism. Yet was it not utterly destitute of meaning; for had the difference of position put Mr. Quiddy to one-tenth part of a farthing's expense, he would have allowed his visitor to remain standing for a fortnight—unless, indeed (upon his favourite principle “never to give nothing for nothing”), something might be gained or some point carried by means of it.

For a few moments the parties sat in silence, each bent forward with his hands on his knees, and vacantly gazing at the fire. At length, thus Quiddy:

“I say, Mr. Grubb—you’ve been a long while closeted with the old ’oman.”

“Yes,” replied Grubb, without the slightest change of countenance or posture.

“All about her temporary affairs—eh?” continued Quiddy.

“Temporal,” said the lawyer, in a tone of correction, but still gazing at the fire.

“Well—yes—that’s what I mean: her temporal affairs, eh?”

“Yes,” replied Grubb.

“Ah!—making her will, eh?” said the inquirer.

“No,” was the reply.

“What!” exclaimed Quiddy, “not make her will! Why you don’t mean to let her make such a fool of herself as to take and die testament?”

“Intestate,” said Grubb, somewhat peevishly.

“Ay—yes—you know what I mean. But she *an’t* a-going to die without making a will; *is* she, Mr. Grubb?” This was uttered in an imploring and anxious tone.

“No,” replied Grubb.

“Then it’s high time she should make it. Suppose she should go off in the night?” exclaimed the considerate Quiddy. “You know I an’t no relation, and

nobody has been more kinder to her than me. Don't go, don't, Mr. Grubb," eagerly cried Quiddy to his visiter, who was about to rise : "stay till Mr. Fag is gone, and then go up to the poor creetur again. What *can* he be so long about ? One would think he never means to come down. Why can't he as well come to-morrow ? It's very unfeeling of him to be a bothering the poor soul, when a little sleep might do her good ; and if she should go off sudden, poor dear, I'm sure it will break my heart. Now do go up to her as soon as he's gone, and get her to make a will to-night,—don't let her *rest* till she has done it—now, do go—won't you, Mr. Grubb ?"

"No," replied Grubb.

Again there was a short silence, which was broken by a sudden exclamation from Quiddy.

"I say—Mr. Grubb—why—perhaps she has made a will already, eh ?"

"Yes."

Quiddy, greatly relieved by this information, emitted a long breath, and then inquiringly said,

"Yet you have never been alone with her, here, since the old man died ?"

"No," said Grubb.

"Then she must have gone to your house about it, eh ? And yet," continued the questioner—not waiting for the monosyllabic reply of the attorney—"and yet she has been out of this house only once since the—"

A light suddenly burst upon his mind ; and clapping his hands together, he said—

"Then *that* was it : the day she went out in a hackney-coach, and I couldn't make out the why or the wherefore of it. Well, I'm glad she has made a will, for nobody could have slaved more than me for her, or have made her more comfortable.—Mr. Grubb ?"

"Well ?" said Grubb, still maintaining the same dry, inexpressive tone.

"You know I'm no relation," continued the other ; "and, as I said before, I've been uncommon kind and attentive to her.—Ahem !—In *course* she set me down for *summut*, ch ?"

Mr. Grubb hesitated for a moment, as in doubt whether or not, by a reply, he should be betraying the confidence reposed in him as a professional man. But he compromised the question with his conscience by a slight affirmative nod.

"And—and she hasn't made no alteration in the will since ?" asked Quiddy, with some hesitation.

"None," replied Grubb.

A gleam of satisfaction shot across Quiddy's countenance, which was unperceived by the lawyer, for the reason that he was still looking at the fire. The former drew a long sigh, and said—

"Well—the poor old 'oman's sufferings have been very great, and the sooner she's relieved from 'em, *now*, the better. I'm sure it would be a mercy to the poor creature if she was taken off this blessed night ; and if she's left to herself, bless her, she'll go off as quiet as a lamb."

There was now a silence of some minutes' duration. Both parties seemed to be immersed in thought. What might be occupying the mind of Mr. Grubb, or if anything at all, is nothing to our purpose : he might have been in that delightful state of dreamy abstraction which fire-gazing so frequently begets ; watching the rise and fall of mountains, towers, and castles, and the formation and disappearance of all manner of animals which the earth owns, has shown, or never did or will produce. But the other was evidently debating within himself a matter of deep importance. It was a question of *expense*, and whether (as a friend of ours, a gallicised Englishman, would say), "the *jeu* would *vaut* the *chandelle*," when, having carried it in the affirmative, though by a very small majority of his own in-

clinations, he startled the attorney from his reverie by a heavy slap on the knee, saying—

“Come; I say, Mr. Grubb, it’s a cold night ; what say you to a drop of summut warm and comfortable ?” And this he uttered with the sudden and desperate energy with which one plunges into a cold bath on a frosty morning lest his resolution should fail by delay.

The unexpectedness, as well as the acceptable character of the invitation, warmed the monosyllabic attorney into the delivery of what, from him, seemed an oration ; and he replied—returning his inviter the familiar slap on the knee—

“I say ‘Yes,’ with all my heart, Mr. Quiddy.”

We must here explain a point in the character of Mr. Grubb. From the style of his conversation (if such it may be termed) up to this moment, it will be assumed that he was a man exceedingly cautious in his talk ; and so, indeed, he was, or rather strove to be. For, aware of his own infirmity (a dangerous one for a person of his profession) a love of hearing the rattle of his own tongue—which infirmity had sometimes betrayed him into saying more concerning the affairs of his clients than might be to their advantage—he never, at the outset of a conversation, allowed himself the use of two words if he could contrive that one should serve his purpose. But the offending organ, like a rusty post-horse, would warm into speed as it proceeded on its journey, and leave prudent resolutions behind. Add to which—and he was by no means singular in this—Grubb would sometimes divulge a secret merely to show his own importance as the depository of it.

“Then what shall it be, Mr. Grubb ?” inquired the host ; “though I’ve nothing but gin to give you”—forgetting a small quantity of brandy and hollands (both more costly materials) on the same shelf with it

The choice proposed being by no means perplexing, Grubb, without hesitation, replied—"Gin."

Quiddy took from a cupboard the spirit chosen (if so we may say) by the attorney, together with a couple of glasses, and placed them upon the table. He next transferred the kettle of water from the hob to the fire, observing, as he resumed his seat—

"I don't take sugar myself, but that's no rule for *you*, Mr. Grubb:" adding in a tone which clearly indicated towards which side of the question he hoped the taste of his guest might incline—"so if *you* like any, why—"

"Yes," replied Grubb, "and if *you* please, Mr. Quiddy, I should like a slight squeeze of lemon at the same time."

This "*liking*" was an *extra* which Quiddy had not contemplated, and was the less agreeable to him inasmuch as it occasioned a positive and visible disbursement.

"I have not got such a thing in the house," said Quiddy; "but—come, I'll send my shopboy out on purpose to buy one for you—eh, Mr. Grubb?"

Mr. Q. having waited long enough for Mr. G. to say "No" fifteen times over, and Mr. G. not accommodating him with the desired refusal, but only twiddling the fire with the tip of the poker; Mr. Q. reluctantly drew some halfpence from his pocket, and despatched his shopboy for what he considered the superfluous luxury.

We must here apologize for Mr. Quiddy's calling his shopboy—a *shopboy*. This was no singular vulgarity on the part of our hero, for in those days it was a common practice to designate such a functionary by neither more nor less than that very term. In these more refined times, he would probably be called the "young gentleman of the emporium," or described by some other circumlocutory phrase, equally elegant, and as little likely to wound his feelings: as in the puff-

advertisement of an Oxford-street haberdasher, which is now lying before us, we are told that "there are nearly forty *ladies* and *gentlemen* on the establishment, dressed uniformly in black; an arrangement which gives an air of great respectability to the concern." In Quiddy's early time—that is to say, in the days of good King George the Third, these purveyors of tape and bobbin would simply have been styled *shopmen* and *shopwomen*, nor have felt themselves in the slightest degree offended by the appellation. To say nothing about the "ladies," it must be consoling to the younger sons of the English nobility and gentry to learn that (the *other* liberal professions being overstocked) there is now a refuge for "gentlemen" behind the haberdashers' counters.—*O Temp*— But the exclamation is worn threadbare, so we'll "none on't."*

To proceed. The requisite materials being collected, each party "brewed" for himself; the attorney—if any meaning might be extracted from Quiddy's compressed lips, as he anxiously watched the operations of his guest—the attorney making his own glass unmercifully strong.

Whilst they were sipping their first glass, Quiddy put many side-questions to Grubb touching the widow's will, all of which meant, "How much has she

* The advertisement in question, a piece of ostentatious foolery, appeared some time in December, 1840, in a sheet called the *Post Magazine*. Of this sheet, three pages were filled with advertisements, together with scraps in prose and verse; the remaining page was a blank on which might be written a letter. The whole was within the penny-postage weight, and, together with a post-office label, was sold for three halfpence. The paper we have unluckily mislaid; but (the italics excepted) we pledge our word for the strict accuracy of the extract, else might the silly impertinence about "*ladies and gentlemen*" serving behind a haberdasher's counter, be considered as a gross exaggeration. We denounce all such affectations, because we deem them to be more mischievous in their effect than, upon a hasty consideration, they may appear. For their melancholy results look to the police-courts and the playhouse lobbies!

left me?" It was a clear case of *pumping*: and the attorney knew enough of his entertainer to be aware that his hospitality was intended as a bribe for the betrayal of the secret. But Grubb resolved, like a high-principled attorney as he was, not to compromise his character for secrecy and discretion—for *one* glass of gin-punch. Yet, at the same time, he thought it would be hardly fair to trespass further on Quiddy's liberality—to accept a fee, as it were—and perform no service in return; besides, sooner or later, probably within a few hours, Quiddy would obtain the desired information as a matter of course, and without incurring the slightest obligation to him for it. He therefore resolved to make a merit of *partly* disclosing the nature of the testament.

"Mr. Quiddy," he began—his tongue thawed by the comfortable liquid which he had imbibed—"Mr. Quiddy, it is clear to me, although you don't come at once, and distinctly to the point, that you wish me to instruct, or inform, or acquaint you in what mode or form, or manner Mrs. Sanderson has disposed of her worldly effects. Now really Mr. Q., you *ought* to be aware that I, her professional, her *confidential* friend, cannot with any degree of — I say I *cannot* as you must be aware—"

As he uttered these words he slowly slid his empty glass away from him to a distant part of the table, as if intending to dispense with its further services; when Quiddy, affecting a tone of jovial hospitality, said—

"Come, Mr. Grubb—come—yes—now do—a little drop more—just a little, eh?"

To this invitation Grubb only replied by slowly drawing his glass back again, and filling it to the brim with a mixture "more potent than the first;" and whilst so employed, he resumed his exordium—but with a scarcely perceptible, though important, variation of two or three little words:—

"As I was about to say, Mr. Q., that although you

must be aware that as Mrs. Sanderson's confidential friend I *ought not* to comply with your wish, yet out of friendship and regard for you, I will trust you with the—"

At this moment Janet, who, after some days of close attendance upon Mrs. Sanderson, had taken advantage of the visits of Mr. Fag and the attorney, to go out and get what she called "a mouthful of fresh air," returned and entered the room; for which interruption the amiable Quiddy in his heart wished the poor girl where the air is supposed to be not of the most refreshing. Janet, with a faint smile, nodded to Quiddy and dropped a courtesy to Grubb, who acknowledged the salutation with a "How d'ye do, Miss Janet?"

"*Miss*, indeed!" muttered Quiddy; and he continued aloud, and in a surly tone—"You must go down into the kitchen just now, d'ye hear? me and Mr. Grubb is engaged, and Mr. Fag is still up stairs with the old 'oman."

But just then Mr. Fag descended and took his leave of the occupants of the parlour: whereupon Janet, with another smile to the tobacconist and courtesy to the lawyer, betook herself to the bedroom of the invalid.

"But, I say, Mr. Grubb," said Quiddy (who had been startled, though scarcely knowing why, by the title bestowed upon Janet), "I say; that girl is only our servant-girl: why did you call the girl *Miss*?"

"Mr. Quiddy," said the attorney, motioning to the former to draw his chair closer to him—"Mr. Quiddy, ———."

Now as the cautious attorney put his lips close to the ear of his confidant and spoke in low whispers, we are unable, with one exception, to repeat a syllable of his communications, and therefore left to draw our inferences concerning them from Quiddy's exclamations, which were delivered in somewhat a louder tone.

"——— richer than one would have thought," said Grubb.

"Poor dear old soul! she'll be an angel in heaven!" said Quiddy, putting his pocket-handkerchief to his eyes, as if shedding tears.

"—— ———," whispered Grubb.

"Who'd ha' thought it!" exclaimed Quiddy, dropping his handkerchief upon his knees.

"—— ———," continued Grubb,

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Quiddy, moistening his lips, which had suddenly become parched.

"—— ———," was the next communication of Grubb.

"The artful young hussy!" cried Quiddy, clenching his hands and biting his lips.

"In conclusion, —— ———," whispered Grubb.

"The cursed old hag! Old Nick will have the roasting of her!" exclaimed Quiddy, striking the table with his clenched fist, and with such force as to make the very glasses leap with astonishment.

"And now you know all about it, Mr. Quiddy," said the attorney, swallowing the remainder of his second glass of gin-punch, and removing the kettle from the fender on to the fire.

Quiddy took, or seemed to take, no notice of this intelligible transfer; but, rising, replaced the gin and sugar, together with the remains of the lemon, in the little corner cupboard.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Grubb, looking at his watch; "near eleven o'clock! Well, now, really I must go."

"As you please; the best friends must part," said Quiddy, with a forced attempt at jocularitv.

So, without another word, he took up the candle, led Mr. Grubb to the door, and wished him good night.

The guest having departed, the amiable host betook himself to bed. For some hours he lay, or rather tossed about, revolving in his mind the information he had received from the attorney, alternately muttering at

each change of position, "Cursed old hag!"—"Artful young hussy!" A plan of proceeding at length occurred to him, of the success of which he entertained not a doubt.

"What a fool am I," thought he, "not to have thought of that before! Why it's all one and the same thing; yet here have I been fretting myself till I'm almost—yaw!—yaw?" And after three or four preparatory yawns, he slept.

CHAPTER VIII.

Another Case of Pumping—Ingenuousness *versus* Cunning—
Our 'cute Friend takes but little by his Motion.

"WELL, Janet," said Quiddy, in a tone of unusual kindness, as, on the following morning, the former took her seat at the breakfast-table—"Well, Janet, and how is the old 'oman by *this* time?"

"She is fast asleep, or I should not have quitted her bedside; but I fear it will soon be over with her," replied Janet, in a melancholy tone.

"If you'd got as much feeling, Janet, as I have," said Quiddy, "you'd say the sooner the better for the poor creetur, for she has been a great sufferer."

"But whilst there's life there's hope, Mr. Quiddy"—(somehow, Quiddy did not like the *Mister*)—"and should the poor soul recover, as I pray she may—"

"She's past praying for," said Quiddy; "and at her age, to go a-lingering on in pain—it cuts *me* to the heart to think on it. Ah! I'm sure it's anything but a blessing to have such tender feelings." And as he put his handkerchief to his eyes he sighed deeply.

"Well, Providence knows best," said Janet; "yet, after all, perhaps, it would be a mercy if—"

"Mercy? *in* course it would," said Quiddy, eagerly taking up the word; "the greatest of mercies. I dare

say Dr. McSquills will bring in a pretty long bill as it is ; and to pay him any more would be only like throwing good money after bad, as we say in trade."

The latter part of this observation Janet did not attend to, for fancying she heard a stir in Mrs. Sanderson's room she ran up stairs. Finding, however, that the old woman still slept, she returned to her breakfast.

For some minutes both parties were silent. During this brief interval Quiddy was considering how he might draw from Janet a point of information which he considered to be material to the plan of proceeding alluded to at the conclusion of the preceding chapter. Ingenuousness was a quality of the very existence of which he was ignorant ; and, himself possessing not one particle of it, it is not to be wondered at that he thought it impossible to elicit the truth by a straightforward question. As we have before observed, he was proud to think himself cunning—'cute : he saw no "cleverness" in a direct proceeding : any fool wishing to know the time of day could ask, simply, "What's o'clock?" but *he* would hardly rely on the information unless obtained by some tortuous mode of inquiry. Truth might, for him, for ever sleep at the bottom of her well, unless he could contrive a crooked rope wherewith to draw her out.

Now, upon the present occasion, he wished to know whether Janet was acquainted with the nature of Mrs. Sanderson's will, and had he said, "Janet, are you acquainted with the nature of Mrs. Sanderson's will?" Janet would infallibly have replied, "Yes" or "No," as the truth might have been. But, in that case, both question and answer being direct and simple, he would have doubted the girl's veracity. The 'cute young tobacco-nist therefore thus proceeded :—

"I say, Janet, you're a—you're the—that's to say, you're a great favourite of Mr. Grubb's, arn't you?"

"Not that I know of," replied Janet.

"Yes—no—what I mean is, he's a great favourite of yours?" continued Quiddy.

"I've not seen enough of him for that," replied Janet.

"To be sure—exactly so—but you have *talked* to him sometimes, when he came here, eh?"

"I have *talked* to him, certainly."

"*In* course," continued Quiddy, "for without *talking* how could you have asked him how the old 'oman has left her trifle of property, eh, Janet?"

This infallible inquiry, as Quiddy considered it, he accompanied with a knowing look, and a thrust of his forefinger at Janet's elbow.

Janet's cheek was instantly suffused with——No: that wont do? "cheek suffused" is proper only to delicate young ladies of fashion—to heroines of the fragile-form order: touching a tobacconist's little maid-of-all-work we must simply say that at this question Janet coloured up to the very eyes; and with an expression of indignation, she cried—

"And has Mr. Grubb dared to say that I have been so base as to pry into my kind mistress's affairs?"

"Why—hem—no," said Quiddy, startled by this little burst of anger—"no; he didn't *say* so; besides, you had no *need* to ask him, *after* he had told you all about the matter himself."

"Did Mr. Grubb say *that*?" inquired Janet, emphatically.

"No, I can't say he did," stammered the other, taken aback by the girl's unevadable questions; "for how—that is—for what would have been the use of his telling you when you had already asked—I mean—that's to say, when you had already heard it from the old 'oman herself?"

"Whoever told you that, has told you what is false," said Janet. "Do you think Mrs. Sanderson would tell her private affairs to a poor servant-maid like me? or that I should be so ungrateful to her as to try and

worm myself into them? Who was it that told you otherwise, Mr. Quiddy?"

When, with the soul and spirit of an Old Bailey attorney, Quiddy commenced his sneaking cross-examination of Janet, he fixed his cunning little gray eyes upon her, the better to detect any evasion on her part; but quailing beneath her honest gaze, he diverted them towards the fire. To the last question he made no reply; and after a pause, Janet repeated it in precisely the same words, but with stronger emphasis.

"Why," replied he, crossing one leg over the other, and raking the cinders from beneath the lower bars of the grate with the point of his shoe—"why, I—I can't *positively* say *any* body *told* me, but—but—a—"

"But you yourself suspect me capable of such conduct, and have therefore put all these questions in order to try me."

These words she uttered in a tone which was akin to the countenance of the ghost of Hamlet's father, it being "more in sorrow than in anger."

"Lor'! no," said he; "how *can* you think such a thing, Janet?"

"Then why all those questions?"

Perplexed to find a satisfactory reason, he at length stammered out—

"Why, one must talk about something, you know."

Still was his dirty mind not altogether satisfied; still did he entertain some doubts of the truth of what he had drawn from Janet by his wonderfully 'cute, clever method of framing his questions. He therefore did at last that which he had much better have done at first, and, turning towards her, said—

"Janet, do you know anything about the contents of the old 'oman's will?"

"No," replied Janet, looking him full in the face—as was indeed her invariable custom, whether when speaking to any one, or when spoken to,

"Then don't you know nothing, in no way, not in the least, how she has left her property?"

"No," again replied she.

Just then Mrs. Sanderson rang her bell, and Janet left the room to attend to the summons—for a minute wondering what Quiddy could mean by those very odd questions, and, presently (absorbed in attentions to her mistress) forgetting all about them.

There is something in simple Truth which will not be resisted: it will compel its way into minds the most unwilling to receive it; and an unadorned "Yes" or "No," coming in honesty and sincerity from the heart, is a match, nay, a master, for the most dextrous and refined sophistry that human ingenuity can invent. Thus, in the present instance, the simple "No" of Janet satisfied even the nasty suspicious mind of Quiddy himself, that she knew no more about the matter which the attorney had confided to him on the previous evening, than that know-nothing gentleman so frequently appealed to—the Man in the Moon.

"That'll do; all's right; mine's the plan!" thought Quiddy, rubbing his hands in token of satisfaction, and proceeding to his place behind his counter. "All's right, and I'll bring her to settle matters as soon as I can get her alone this evening, for fear—"

Here his thoughts were interrupted by the entrance of a customer; so that what it was he feared, that brought him to the resolution of precipitating matters, as also what those matters exactly were, must, for a short time, remain a subject for guessing to such as may think it worth their trouble.

CHAPTER IX.

More "Cleverness"—An illustrative Anecdote—A touching Incident—Our Hero's disinterested Concern for a "Maiden all Forlorn"—A magnificent Proposal—rejected!

It was now about six o'clock on the evening of the same day on which the conversation we have just related occurred; consequently not four-and-twenty hours, be it remembered, since Mr. Grubb made certain disclosures to Quiddy touching Mrs. Sanderson's will.

Janet Gray was kneeling at one side of the dead woman's bed, sobbing audibly; Phineas Quiddy, groaning, or rather grunting, was kneeling at the other.

"Come, come, Janet, girl," said Doctor McSquills, kindly, "wailing will never bring back the dead. Come, rise, my guid lassie, and when you have done what is proper for the present, get you to bed. After so many watchful nights you have need of rest, I'll be bound for it."

He gently raised her from the ground. She bent herself over the body of Mrs. Sanderson, with her arms about her neck, and her lips to her cold forehead. In this attitude she remained for a few minutes, and, seemingly, in prayer. Then rising, and wiping her eyes, she turned to the doctor and calmly said,—“Now, what's to be done, sir?”

Doctor McSquills, having given her some brief instructions, desired Quiddy to follow him out of the room; whereupon the latter made demonstrations of the most violent grief, declaring that the deplorable event would break his heart—that it would be the death of him—that he should soon follow his dear friend—that—that, at any rate, it was impossible to tear himself from her side.

"You had better do what the doctor desires," said Janet, in a melancholy tone.

To this recommendation Quiddy paid no attention ; but the doctor, who probably estimated his sorrow at its true value, just putting one of his huge hands under Quiddy's arm, raised him from the ground and led him to the door, saying, "Meester Queedy, it'll just please you to do as I'm telling you."

When they were in the room below, McSquills inquired whether the old lady had left a will ?

"Will ?" dolefully ejaculated Quiddy.

"Has Mrs. Sanderson left a will ?" repeated the doctor.

"Left a will ? why—a—how should I know !" innocently inquired the other.

"How, mon ? why, ye're a partner in the business, and—"

"A third share in the profits ; but as I never expected anything from the poor dear soul, in course I—"

"That's nae to the purpose : has she left a will ?" reiterated the doctor, somewhat angrily.

"Not that *I've seen*," artfully replied Quiddy.

"Then you maun go instantly and apprize Mr. Grubb of the melancholy event. It's certain he knows ; and the old lady may have left instructions requiring immediate attention."

"I'll go the first thing in the morning, doctor."

"Go now, mon,—or—stay—I'll go to him mysel' !"

"No, doctor, not you," said Quiddy, eagerly ; "I'll go this very instant." And, with these words, he took his hat from a peg and clapped it upon his head.

"That's weel—guid night—I'll call again to-morrow."

The doctor departed, and the hat of Mr. Phineas Quiddy was replaced upon its peg.

The two hours that passed between this moment and the appearance of Janet seemed to the impatient Quiddy an age. Once, in the course of that time, there was a knock at the street door, and Quiddy started in alarm

lest it should be the attorney, whose visit at this juncture might very materially derange his plans. But his alarm was groundless. Still, as the evening was not very far advanced, there was danger of the pleasure of a visit from him ; so, as soon as Janet entered the room, Quiddy suggested the propriety, under the present sad circumstances, of refusing admittance to all, or any, visitors who might come. "For," said he, "I'm sure we an't in spirits to talk to anybody :—besides, it will be but respectful to the poor dear departed up stairs." To this Janet assented ; and Quiddy having barred and bolted the outer door, or to use the seaman's phrase, "made all snug for the night," muttered, as he completed the operation—"There !—all's safe now ;—let him come—he may knock his heart out before I let him in."

"Your son, Sir William," said a college tutor to the father of his conceited, self-sufficient pupil—one of those who are prone to—the phrase is expressive, so out with it—to "teach their grannies to suck eggs ;"—one who presumed rather to teach his tutor than condescend to receive instruction from him ;—"Your son, sir, is a remarkably clever young man."

"I am glad you think so, doctor."

"Sir William, he is a *wonderfully* clever young man."

"You delight me, doctor."

"Sir,—possibly, he is one of the cleverest young men in the kingdom."

"You make me proud and happy beyond expression, my dear doctor."

"*But*, Sir William, he is nothing like the clever young man he thinks himself."

In this predicament stood Phineas. The plan which he had arranged in his mind was honoured with his own entire approval. He considered it to be the very perfection of a plan—infallible ; and, indeed, up to this moment, circumstances had run in favour of it. Judging

of Janet's character by his own, he had anticipated every reply and observation she must of necessity make to everything he intended to say to her, and arranged the course of the conversation accordingly: as thus:—"When I say *so and so*, she'll say *so and so*; upon which I say *this*, to which she will naturally say *that*—" and so on. Now this is no uncommon proceeding with your castle-builders—with those who indulge in imaginary conversations: the great inconvenience of it is, that a failure in one single point of the sequence is likely to overturn the whole scheme. We shall now see how the system worked in the present case.

Quiddy re-entered the room and took his customary place at the fireside, opposite to the old arm-chair which had formerly been occupied by Mrs. Sanderson; Janet was seated, as heretofore, at the table, and facing the fire. Thus he began:—

"So, Janet, she's gone at last"—and he pretended to cry.

"At last!" said Janet, calmly but mournfully—her eyes fixed on her clasped hands, which were resting upon her knees.

"But it's a happy release for her, and I know you think so, too."

Janet looked up at him for an instant, as if she would have said, "How can you know that?"

"I mean—at least—that is, you don't take on—you don't cry as much as I thought you would."

"There's no good in crying, Mr. Quiddy; yet no one can lament her loss more than I do."

"In course," said Quiddy, imagining that he had at at once fixed her to the desired point; "*in course*; for what is now to become of *you*?"

"I lament her death for her own sake," said Janet; "but though she has gone who was a second mother to me, I trust I shall be provided for."

Quiddy, with some alarm, was about to exclaim,

"Then you *do* know something of the old 'oman's will ;" but this was prevented by Janet, who continued—

"Heaven, which gave a poor orphan friends here, will, I trust, provide friends for her elsewhere."

"If that's all she thinks she has to trust to," thought Quiddy, "all's safe still." But the "elsewhere," which seemed to imply an intention of departure, an event upon which he had never calculated under any circumstances, somewhat put him out : he had counted upon an admission, on Janet's part, of her entire dependance upon him—an assumption which was, indeed, the base of his proceedings, and which, giving way, he was what is emphatically termed "bothered." He scratched his head and "hem'd ;" he rose and snuffed the candle (which did not require his aid), and "ha'd ;" and then, instead of resuming his own chair, he placed himself (whether by accident or design, we know not) in that which, for so many years, had been exclusively Mrs. Sanderson's.

There was something in this apparently unimportant act that startled Janet, and she burst into tears.

Death, to those unaccustomed to witness it, and more especially the death of one we love and have long associated with, has a stunning, stupifying effect upon the mind : we cannot immediately believe, or *understand*, as it were, that the object we so lately saw move, however slightly—heard breathe, however faintly—is at once silent and motionless for ever !

The trifling incident we have noticed, spoke eloquently to the heart of Janet : it seemed to have removed any latent and inexplicable doubt she might still have entertained of the melancholy fact ; for, looking at once at the chair and its unseemly occupant, she said, with a long-drawn sigh—"Yes—she is gone !"

"Yes," said Quiddy, utterly unconscious of what was passing in the poor girl's mind, "that's what we were talking about. But, as you said before, Janet, there's no good in crying. And yet, what *is* to become of you?"

Now, according to Quiddy's preconceived notion of the course which this conversation *must* take—a notion founded upon a false estimate of Janet's character—Janet's reply ought to have been, "I have no one but you to look to for help, so the smallest donation will be thankfully received." Whereupon Quiddy had prepared himself to be very kind, and condescending, and patronising, and to say—But no matter *what* he had prepared himself to say, for Janet making no reply at all to his question, which was more provoking than anything she could have said, he was again "bothered ;" and this time, as a momentary relief from his difficulties, he poked the fire—an attention (as in the case of the candle) superfluous, however kindly meant.

"What I intended to say," at length said he (although it was by no means what he had intended to say), "you—I—in short, *I'm master now.*"

No reply.

Cunning but not adroit, these two or three unexpected snaps in the cleverly-spun thread of his discourse confused him. He had entered a labyrinth with the clue in his hand, confident of its leading him to the point desired: his guide failing, he wriggled about, taking every turn but the right one. Then why, it may be asked, did he not, from the first, take the direct, straight road to his object? Because, had he done so, he would not have been Mr. Phineas Quiddy.

Now Phineas had never been certain whether or not Janet was acquainted with what had passed between himself and Mrs. Sanderson on the night of his memorable proposal to that lady. He was, however, rather disposed to believe she was not; but even were it otherwise, destitute as she thought herself to be, that circumstance could not, "*in course,*" prevent the success of his project.

"Well, as I was a-saying," at length said he,— "that is, as I was a-going to say," (which again he was not)—"she was a tolerable good woman."

"She was an excellent woman," said Janet, fervently.

"And yet, Janet, she had her weak points."

"So have we all, Mr. Quiddy."

"I know—yes—what I mean by that is, she was very partial to me—uncommon fond, I may say—but lor', she was old enough to be my grandmother, poor foolish old 'oman, and so I told her, poor silly old creetchur !"

Quiddy did not see the expression of Janet's countenance, whilst listening to this lying insinuation (and such she knew it to be) ; for, as he seldom looked any one boldly in the face when addressing them, so now were his eyes directed towards the fire ; but scarcely had he uttered the last words when, with more of indignation than ever before was extorted from her, and at the same time pointing upwards with her forefinger, she exclaimed—

"For shame ! Reflect, man, that the poor woman you are so disrespectfully speaking of, who was a kind friend to me, *and to you*, is lying dead above our heads, and as yet is scarcely cold."

She rose to quit the room ; but, upon Quiddy's assuring her he had something particular to say, she resumed her seat.

"Why, lor', Janet, how serious you take things up ! I never saw you in such a—lor', I only meant to—there—that's right—sit down."

Perceiving that for some time her companion got no further in his important communication than the emission of three or four short coughs, at length she said—

"I have gone through a great deal of fatigue, and require a little rest ; so please tell me at once what it is you've got to say."

Now, we will anticipate what he had to say : it was just these few words :—

"I want you this very night to sign a promise to marry me,—"*("for reasons best known to myself,"*

would have been his own private thought :) but, for the soul of him, he could take no way to his point but the crooked one.

“Why—I *was* a kind friend to the poor woman, as you said just now—that is, not *said*, but you *know*—indeed all the world knows—I’m sure I was a slave for her and her husband too, morning, noon, and night ; so that if she *has* left *me* the little trifle she got together, why it’s—that is, Janet, she’d no relations, so who has a better right ?”

Janet merely nodded assent, which gesture was not observed by her companion, who was looking at his thumbs, which he was twiddling one over the other.

“Not that I care about it,” continued he, “for I’ve scraped together a little of my own—a few hundreds, I may say, and all by *sheer industry*.”

“I’m very glad indeed to hear it—very,” said Janet, earnestly.

“*In* course,” said Quiddy, “for who’ll be the better for it ?”

And here he ventured for a moment to look up towards her, casting at her over his shoulder what he meant for a tender glance.

“Who’ll be the better for it ? Yourself,” replied Janet.

“And an’t I a-thinking of nobody else ? Ah, Janet ! now Mrs. S. is gone, you think yourself left destitute in the world, without a friend to take care of you ; but there’s somebody—*somebody*, Janet, my dear, to take compassion on you.”

“I need be beholden to no one’s compassion,” said Janet.

“No, Janet, that’s not what I mean.—I mean—in short, though I never could hope to *get* anything by it, I always loved you—and I—ahem !—there it is.”

Janet, with a bitter smile, cast her eyes upwards and slowly shook her head ; for she remembered, or rather she had never forgotten, the declaration of his

sentiments towards *her* in the conversation (which she had accidentally overheard) with Mrs. Sanderson.

"And now—and so, Janet," continued he, "I'll marry you, and there you are provided for for life; and if *that* an't disinterested, why—"

With these words he arose and was about to approach the object of his sudden affection.

"You are very kind—very, Mr. Quiddy," said Janet, repelling him; "but I shall never marry."

"What!" exclaimed Quiddy with astonishment, "not marry! not marry *ME*!"

"No," replied Janet, firmly.

"Ah! I see," said he; "that's your shyness, and quite proper at first. But I know—I *know* it, my dear Janet; for, to speak out, the old lady herself once told me that you loved me."

"She told you truly," replied Janet, looking him full in the face; "*I did*."

These two words were uttered in a tone and with an emphasis so pregnant with meaning, that they would have been taken at their full value by any mind a degree less obtuse than our amiable tobacconist's; but by him, their meaning was not only unperceived, but perverted; and he continued:—

"Why, then, if you *did* love me, say you'll marry me—let's sign and seal at once, for, if we leave it till the morning, who knows but that mischief-making doctor, or that meddling attor—in short, Janet, I—you—"

"I will never marry," repeated Janet; and her calm, determined manner of saying so convinced Mr. Quiddy that, for the time being at least, she was in earnest.

"Then what *do* you mean to do in your *forlorn* condition?" inquired the considerate Quiddy.

"Out of my small earnings," replied Janet, "I have saved as much as will carry me back to my native place. I am older and stronger than when I left it, and know my work better; and, with the blessing of

Heaven, I doubt not to find a service. The very day after they have laid my poor dear mistress in her grave I shall quit this house and this town for ever."

"But, surely, you—no!" stammered the other; "no, you cannot mean anything so foolish."

"It is a resolution I made several months ago.—But I'm tired now—I want to sleep—good night, Phineas."

Saying which she pressed his hand, and instantly withdrew to her bed.

It was long since Janet had called Phineas by that familiar name. Her feelings were softened by the melancholy event of the day: she had for the first time given utterance to an intention, long fixed in her mind, of quitting a place where, and a person with whom, she had once been happy. If either of these circumstances, or both combined, will not suffice to account for her little burst of tenderness, it must remain unexplained: most assuredly it is not assignable to any other.

It was with dismay that Quiddy listened to the announcement of Janet's resolution, for there was, as before, a calm determination in her manner that carried conviction along with it. And yet, could she, in her present condition, be serious in rejecting so magnificent an offer as that of his hand, with all his money in it?—heart was out of the question, even if it had been worth the having. Was the very cunning, clever, 'cute,—the *infallible* scheme, which with such vast ingenuity he had contrived, to be thus thwarted? No; it was a "moral impossible." And then, her "uncommon loving manner" of bidding him good night. But rejecting him *now*, what will she do when she comes to know what *he* knows? "Why, *in course*—" Between these arguments *pro* and *con*, he was, like Othello, "perplexed in the extreme;" and not seeing his way satisfactorily out of them that night, he went to bed—muttering, as he ascended

the stairs, and purposely loud enough to be heard by Janet,—

“Well,—there’s plenty of girls in Lunnun ; and with all my money I may be thought a good catch by the best of ’em : that’s *one* comfort.”

CHAPTER X.

The Reading of the Will—A Delicate Remembrance—A Job’s Comforter—The Departure.

WELL ;—Mrs. Sanderson lived, Mrs. Sanderson died, Mrs. Sanderson was buried ; and since, according to Shakspeare (and, perhaps, earlier authorities also, if we chose to be at the trouble of looking them up), precisely the same fate, in all its circumstances, not even excepting the last, befell no less a personage than Alexander the Great, it would have been unreasonable indeed on the part of a small tobacconist’s widow had she complained of ill-usage. Far be it from our intention to insinuate that she did so ; but when we state that she was buried, it may thence be inferred that a week had elapsed since we left Mr. Phineas Quidy soliloquizing on his way to bed. That he did not follow Doctor McSquills’ instructions in immediately acquainting Mr. Grubb with the old lady’s decease, turned out to be a matter of no importance, as she had left directions with Grubb that her will should not be opened, nor its contents divulged, till after her funeral. The trifling communication made in a moment of social confidence by the attorney to Quidy, must, therefore, we suppose, go for nothing.

With the exception of two or three fruitless efforts on the part of Quidy to divert Janet from the resolution she had declared, nothing worth notice had occurred during that week in the house of mourning—

for such it truly was to both parties, though from very different causes.

On the morning of the day after the funeral, Janet, who had already procured information that the Aberdeen smack would sail from London at three o'clock on that afternoon, was busied in preparing for her departure.

It is a valuable rule in travelling to encumber yourself on a journey with no more luggage than may be needful. Of this, perhaps, Janet was ignorant, for she collected together every article she possessed in the world : however, as the whole of her earthly possessions went very commodiously into a small bandbox, she was not likely to suffer much inconvenience from her non-observance of that wholesome precept. Whilst thus occupied, she was summoned down to the parlour, where she found Mr. Quiddy, Dr. McSquills, and Mr. Grubb, seated at the table—the last named personage (with spectacles on nose) holding in his hand a sealed paper.

“Good morning to you, Miss Janet ; pray take a seat, Miss Gray,” said Grubb.

Poor Janet started at hearing, almost for the first time in her life, her name accompanied with so dignified a title ; and, uncertain whether or not it might be bestowed upon her in derision, for a moment she hesitated to accept the invitation.

“Sit ye down, Janet, girl, sit ye down,” said McSquills, kindly taking her by the hand, and drawing her to a vacant chair at his side : “Mr. Grubb is about to read the will of our late respected and lamented friend, Mrs. Sanderson, and I understand it concerns you to be present. I, also, as he tells me, have business here, though what that may just be I cannot even guess at, seeing that the old lady never spoke to me touching her worldly affairs, with none of which was I ever concerned, save and excepting the care of keeping her alive—till she died, puir thing.”

And as he spoke these last words, he took a large pinch of snuff.

With great deliberation, and an air of importance and solemnity befitting the occasion, Mr. Grubb broke the seal of the document which, according to the directions of the deceased, he had, in proper legal phrase and form, drawn up. After two or three preparatory "Ahems!" he thus began :—

"I, Susannah Sanderson, widow of the late—"

But although Mr. Grubb himself was as much delighted at the reading of his own composition—a masterpiece of technicalities, repetitions, and round-aboutisms—as if it had been positively nothing less than a composition in prose, or *worse* (as a cockney would say), for the next year's "Think of Me," or for the "Perfections of Prettiness," it was, evidently, in all but its main points, caviar to his tasteless auditors ; and as, probably, it might be the same to some readers, we will sink the embellishments and give those points alone. This may be done in few words.

Well, then :—after willing two or three small legacies to friends, the largest of which was ten pounds to Dr. McSquills (who was nominated sole executor) for mourning, she bequeathed to Phineas Quiddy "as a reward for his attention to my interests in the management of my business—my share of the stock in trade, including the little figures of the Black-boy and Highlander ; and also—"

Mr. Grubb paused to wipe his spectacles—invariably a slow operation with a grave person when engaged in a grave affair—and Quiddy said, with a sigh—

"Well I *was* a slave to her, that all the world knows ;" whilst a momentary expression of pleasure crossed Janet's countenance at hearing so much of Quiddy's good fortune.

The attorney resumed :—"and, also, in token of the value I set upon his disinterested affection for me, as proved by his offer of marriage on the evening of

— — — ;” (the precise date was mentioned), “and of the degree of respect which I entertain for him in consequence of the same, the sum of—” Again the attorney paused to wipe his spectacles, keeping Quiddy breathless with expectation—“the sum of one-pound-one for the purchase of a ring.”

At the reading of this clause, which was new (at least in its terms) to Quiddy (for Grubb had omitted to state those in his recent confidential communication), Quiddy looked at once silly and savage, and bit his lips till tears, real tears, dropped from his eyes. Poor Janet drooped her head and turned all colours of the rainbow—a common expression which we believe to be rather intended as figurative than to be taken as philosophically true; whilst McSquills, with a chuckle which he could not restrain, exclaimed—

“De’il tak’ me but the old woman had som fun in her, and that’s the truth o’ it !”

Grubb proceeded :—“And to Janet Gray whatever else I shall die possessed of, that is to say, my property in the government funds, ready money, household goods, wearing apparel, &c. &c.”—her money in the funds amounting alone to rather more than five hundred pounds.

At this announcement Janet was literally stupified. She looked about her with a vacant gaze as if some great calamity had suddenly befallen her; nor did she immediately recover herself even when McSquills, in an ecstacy of delight, started from his chair, and giving her a hearty kiss, exclaimed—

“I sincerely congratulate you on your guid fortune, and wish it may bring you what you deserve—some guid mon for a husband worthy to share it with you.” Adding, as he resumed his seat, and with a pretended sigh—“Ech ! Janet girl, I wish I were thirty years younger !”

Quiddy thought it requisite that he also should express his congratulations, and muttered something about how very glad he was “that Janet needn’t be

under no obligation to nobody now, whatever people's good intentions was when they thought she needed them." This observation was specially intended for Janet, but it was so indistinctly uttered, that she would hardly have understood it even had she been an attentive listener, which, at that moment, she was not. But her attention was speedily recalled by Mr. Grubb to something "very important;" and so indeed it was. This was nothing less than a clause rescinding the whole of the bequest to Janet, with the exception of fifty pounds, in case she should marry Phineas Quidy; for the reason that the testatrix felt perfectly assured that he was unworthy of her. If she did, then the residue was to be distributed amongst certain charitable institutions. Beyond that single restriction Janet was at liberty to marry whomsoever she would, or to remain unmarried, just as she chose. Dr. McSquills, and one other friend, were requested to act as trustees for her, the nature of the trust being specified. The testatrix taking it for granted that Janet would not remain in the house longer than was unavoidable, directed that the furniture should be sold for her benefit—leaving to Quidy the complimentary privilege of purchasing it at a fair valuation—if he could find the means of so doing.

The "very important" clause, of which Quidy till now was ignorant (as his recent conduct to Janet must prove), fell upon him like a thunderbolt, crushing at once his hopes and his disinterested affection for the residuary legatee. But as there are few misfortunes which are utterly beyond the reach of consolation, so was it, in the present case, with Quidy, who consoled himself with the reflection that there was some luck, at least, in Janet's rejecting his offer of marriage: "for," as he wisely thought, "as the will stands, I should only have got fifty pounds by marrying her, and that would hardly have been worth while." Another consoling consideration was, that the widow's two-thirds of the pigtail, Virginia, and rappee were now his, adding by

so much to his possessions—(another consequence of “sheer industry”)—and again, thought Quiddy, “that’s summut.”

“And what am I to do with all this? it’s a million times more than I shall ever have occasion for,” said Janet, having somewhat recovered from her astonishment, but not exhibiting the slightest symptom of joy at her good fortune.

“Never fash yoursel’ about that,” said McSquills; “we’ll think of some way of settling it for your advantage. But, lassie, dinna look sae glum about it: a wee bit too much o’ the siller is an accident on the right side at ony rate. Ech, guid lord! naebody would tak’ you for a reseediary legatee by the look o’ ye.”

“I wish my dear kind mistress had left it to somebody that would have had more pleasure in it; or that it had been only a few pounds just to—”

“Just let weel alone, Janet,” said McSquills, interrupting her; adding significantly, and in a whisper, “ye’ll be better with it than with thae fifty pounds you wot of.”

“To-morrow we will have some further conversation with Miss Gray,” said Grubb, folding up the will; and as you, doctor, are sole executor—”

“To-morrow, sir!” said Janet, “but I am going away to-day.”

“Going!” exclaimed Law and Physic simultaneously; “and where?”

“I’m going back to my native town,” continued Janet.

“But, my dear Miss Gray,” said Grubb, respectfully, as was befitting towards an heiress, “we cannot well do without you—for a few days, at least.”

“Then what am I to do, sir! *I can’t* remain here”—(This she said in a tone of determination which carried with it “*I won’t*”)—“and unless I go back to Aberdeen, I have nowhere to go to. Besides” (and an important point it was, considering the quantity of her luggage) “besides, I have packed up all my things.”

"Mr. Grubb is right, lassie," said McSquills; "you had better remain in Lunnun till matters are put into some shape. For that time you shall stay in my house, and my sister, bless her auld soul! will tak' care o' ye. As for your luggage, we'll put that into a hackney-coach; or perhaps a porter might manage to carry it for you."

At length, after a pause, Janet, who had been reflecting on the first part of the doctor's speech, without attending to the last, said—

"Well, sir, I'm sure I can't be wrong in following your advice. I'm very grateful to you for your kind offer; and so, if you please, sir, as I have nothing more to do here, I'd rather go with you now—*immediately*."

To this the doctor willingly assented, and Janet withdrew to put on her bonnet and shawl—the only remaining portion of the necessary preparation for her departure. At the same time Grubb took his leave, promising to see the doctor again in the afternoon.

"Aweel, Meester Queddy," in a tone of consolation said McSquills to the gentleman with the one-pound-one, who with a downcast look sat biting his lips for very vexation and disappointment—"Aweel, it's just nae use to give up to sorrow for your loss." (Quiddy emitted a long deep sigh.) "I dinna mean the loss of the siller, mon, which you are above caring for, but of your guid friend, the widow."

"In course," replied Quiddy, "that's what *I* mean."

"Meester Queddy—I'm varra greatly astonished she didna do better for you, for you loved her varra sincerely."

"I lov—I liked her disinterested, sir," said Quiddy, rather angrily.

"Tenderly, Meester Queddy, tenderly, as I weel ken your love for the old lady brought you near to death's door; and it would ha' been opened to you if I hadna come to your assistance, for you had aw but got the knocker in your hand, as a body may say."

"I'd thank you not to touch upon that 'ere matter, sir," said Quiddy; "it's of a delicate nature."

"But then," continued the doctor, "there's her two-thirds of the stock in trade, which (not meaning a paltry pun at it) is not to be sneezed at. That's worth a guid round hundred to you."

"I'm sure I haven't an idea," replied Quiddy, sulkily.

"Weel, mon, I never suspected you had, so dinna fash yoursel'."

"I mean of its *vally*, sir: it may be, or it mayn't; but it ain't for its vally I consider it."

"Meester Queddy"—again burst out the imperturbable doctor, after a momentary silence—"Meester Queddy, I'm thinking the widow ken'd your character right weel: she just appreciated the delicacy o' your sentiments. That guinea, Meester Queddy! what could be mair delicate—or mair elegant—or mair refined? Had she bequeathed you Janet's portion (which is the lion's share unquestionably), or three hundred pund, for instance—or twa hundred—or ane hundred—or even twenty pund—it would have been coarse and vulgar in the comparison. But a guinea! a delicate compliment, varra!"

Quiddy sat writhing in his chair; and his tormentor having taken breath, was again upon him:—

"Meester Queddy—I'm thinking that a guinea is nae mickle money—that is to say, considered in the light o' money—in short, it is but a wee bit money: and, *considered as a legacy*, it is an unco wee affair indeed. But Meester Queddy—as times go, a guinea is a guinea, after aw—it's just ane-and-twenty shillings, and quite enough, I'm taking the freedom to tell you, to dispense upon siccan a silly bauble, siccan a needless toy as a ring. But then the sentiment, Meester Queddy, the sentiment!"

"Yes," said Quiddy, scarcely knowing *what* to say, "that's it."

"Meester Queddy---how differently the auld lady

has treated Janet! Nae delicacy, nae sentiment in the proceeding, de'il a bit. She has left her naething but the goods, the furniture, and that like—aw money's worth, Meester Queddy—and the trash o' siller too, a guid five hundred pounds, at the least. But where's the sentiment, as in your case, Meester Queddy? where's the delicacy?"

"D—n the delicacy!" cried Quiddy, unable any longer to endure with patience the doctor's grave raillery; "D—n the delicacy! I never cared about the money: but if I had chosen to carney and earwig the old 'oman, as *some* folks have done, I should have stood as good a chance of getting some of it as *other* folks—not that I care about it, not I!"

"True, varra true; and Mrs. Sanderson ken'd that right weel, as her will shows. And yet I must say she has not proved herself ower grateful to you for your tender affection—always excepting the delicacy and sentiment of the wee bit legacy, Meester Queddy—whereas, I'm thinking that had you made up to Janet instead, and married *her*—I say, I'm just thinking—such are the contradictions in the human character—the old woman would have left you every stick and stiver of her property."

Having paused for just long enough, as he thought, to allow the barb of this last insinuation to fix itself well in the heart of his victim, McSquills continued—

"And it would be nae sae bad a thing for you to marry Janet even now—always providing the lassie would have you, Meester Queddy, the whilk I doubt—for she'd mak' you a nice little wifie. As to the forfeiture thereby of the trash o' siller, you are altogether above any such sordid consideration."

"I'm not thinking of marrying nobody," peevishly said Quiddy; "and as to Janet, she knows well enough I wouldn't have her if she was worth her weight in gold."

So saying, and to escape from further torturing, he rose abruptly, and went forward into the shop.

Meanwhile Janet had made herself ready for her departure. Previously to quitting her room she looked leisurely and attentively around it, as if bidding a last farewell to each familiar object ; then, just placing her head upon the pillow on which it had enjoyed so many nights of peaceful sleep, she kissed it as though it had been a thing conscious of the grateful and affectionate feeling which prompted the act ; and, having so done, she, with a sigh, descended to the room which had been the late Mrs. Sanderson's. Here, with her face buried in her hands, she knelt at the foot of the bed in which her benefactress had expired, and murmured a short prayer. As she rose, she perceived, lying on a chair in a corner of the room, the old woman's large Bible, with her spectacles remaining in the very place where she had last been reading. She went down-stairs, and timidly, and with some hesitation, asked the doctor whether she might be allowed to take something away with her "as a remembrance of poor Mrs. Sanderson."

"It's aw your ain, Janet," said McSquills ; "you may tak' onything you please excepting the snuff and tobacco—"

Janet ran up-stairs as McSquills added, "and Meester Queddy ; and he, I reckon, is scarce worth the taking."

Janet re-descended with the big Bible under her left arm, and a small blue paper band-box, containing all her "things," in her hand.

"I have taken this, if you please, sir," said Janet, casting her eyes down at the volume. "And now I'll bid Mr. Quiddy good-by, and go with you."

The doctor went into the shop, and motioned to Quiddy to join Janet in the parlour. Janet took his hand in her right, which was disengaged, and looked him earnestly, but mournfully in the face. He, on the

contrary, bent his eyes to the ground, and looked at once sheepish and sullen.

For more than a minute (a long time under such circumstances) Janet endeavoured to speak, but in vain. At length, in a low and faltering voice, she said—

“It need not have been *so*, Phineas ; but it’s all your own fault. Good-by, *for ever*—God bless you, Phineas.”

She rushed past the doctor, who was waiting for her in the shop, into the street, and hastily turned in the direction of his house. All that Quiddy said in reply to the adieu was—

“Good-by Janet—I’m sorry you’re a-going.”

“Meester Queddy,” said McSquills, “I am not likely to trouble you with mony visits. If you want to see me professionally, and choose to send for me, I’ll come to you. But ye’ll no hae forgotten my system of practice, I reckon ; and so good day to you—Meester Queddy.”

That Janet once loved “Meester Queddy” is a circumstance not to be wondered at—(albeit she was, perhaps, the only one woman to be found in ten thousand who could have placed her affections on so unloveable an object)—because love is an eccentric passion defying and deriding rule : that (aware as she had become of his heartlessness and mean selfishness) she still loved him, we doubt. What, then, was the nature of her sentiments towards him ? We believe it to have been nothing more than that feeling of settled and enduring kindness which, in bosoms incapable of hatred, will not unfrequently supply the place that has once been occupied by love.

CHAPTER XI.

More "Sheer Industry"—The Agonies of Composition—Elegant Epistles.

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Quiddy, with an air of the greatest astonishment.

"Why, what is there about it to astonish you?" said Grubb; "you knew she was going."

"I know she *said* she'd go," said Quiddy; "but I never thought she was in earnest. Gone to Aberdeen!"

"She was not the girl to trifle, that I can tell you," said Grubb; "she remained not an hour longer than was absolutely necessary to arrange affairs, and yesterday she went."

We must here observe that the conversation into which we have rushed abruptly had been commenced on the part of Grubb, in the monosyllabic style of which we have already given a specimen.

"Gone to Aberdeen!" again exclaimed Quiddy; and pointing to the spot where she stood, when she bade him farewell, he pathetically continued—"And it's only a week ago that there she stood.—Poor Janet!—Gone!—And, *Mister* Grubb, what's come of the money?"

"That's well secured, you may be certain," replied the attorney; "for I drew up the trust-deed—ahem!—and Dr. McSquills and his bosom-friend, Mr. Davie McEndall, the undertaker, are the trustees."

"And she may marry anybody she likes, eh?"

"Save and except Phineas Quiddy, at present of Cow-lane, Shoreditch, dealer in snuff and tobacco—I quote the deed, Mr. Quiddy—'otherwise the whole of the said sum of—'"

"I know all that," said Quiddy, impatiently; "there's

no call for your repeating it." He paused for a moment, and then said, "Trustees?—Ha! Then, I suppose, she only gets the interest of the money, after all?"

"And upon the interest of a clear five hundred pounds she may live very comfortably in Aberdeen. The odd sum of thirty-eight pounds seventeen shillings and ninepence, she has taken with her for present purposes."

"Thirty-eight, seventeen, nine," said Quiddy, musingly: "and that she has taken with her: what a sum for a girl that never knew what it was to have a guinea of her own! what *will* she ever do with it?"

"She has a notion," continued Grubb, not noticing Quiddy's observations, "of opening a small shop in the grocery line. By the by, McEndall has given her a letter to his sister, who is settled there, and will advise her on the matter; and, should it be thought to her advantage to do so, the trustees will let her have a hundred pounds to set up with."

"A hundred pounds!" eagerly said Quiddy, "a hundred pounds! Grocery line—nonsense! Let her set up in my line, and send me the money, and I'll supply her with stock without a farthing profit.—There!—and that's acting like an old friend."

"I don't think Mr. McEndall (one of the trustees, remember) would consent to that; for his sister's husband is in that way himself, and might not be thankful to him for sending down a rival in trade. But now, Mr. Quiddy, if you please, we will return to the business I came about."

"Oh—ah!" said Quiddy, pretending indifference; "the furniture. Why, to be sure, I did say I'd take it at a *fair* valuation, providing as how I was allowed time to pay for it; but forty-eight pounds fifteen is a mint of money for it."

"It is fairly worth more than double, as you must well know," replied Grubb. "And now, to let you into a secret, it was Janet's earnest wish that it should

be *given* to you ; but to that Dr. McSquills would not listen."

"Curse Dr. McSquills !" muttered Quiddy ; " what business was it of his'n, I should like to know. Besides," said the ungracious varlet, " as the girl has got all the money, it was the least she could have done. But the fellow never was a friend of mine."

"He was so far your friend that, at Janet's entreaty, he consented to let you have it at the value set upon it by your own appraiser (who between us, Mr. Q., is your intimate friend), and to allow you a twelvemonth for payment. However, we are willing to let you off the bargain ; in which case we shall clear the things away this afternoon, and sell them by auction."

"Why, no—no," said Quiddy, with more alacrity than might have been expected from a dissatisfied purchaser ; as the things belonged to the poor dear departed, *I'll* have them for her sake."

The bargain was instantly concluded, certain papers were signed, and Grubb took his leave. Scarcely was he outside the door, however, when he was recalled by Quiddy.

"Mr. Grubb—Mr. Grubb—I was near forgetting to say something particular."

"Then be quick, if you please, for I am in haste," said Grubb.

"Mr. Grubb," said Quiddy, with a very grave face, "we are all mortal."

"So I remember to have heard," said Grubb ; "is that all you have to say?"

"No ; but as I was saying, as we are all mortal, I should like to know what comes of all that money *if poor Janet should die ?*"

"She may bequeath it in any manner she likes," replied the other ; muttering as he went away, "The rapacious, unfeeling brute !"

"That's all I wanted to know," said Quiddy ; and

then thought to himself—"I wonder whether Aberdeen is a healthy place."

It is an odd fact, that, on that very evening, Quiddy sent to Mr. Rob'em, the appraiser, an old-fashioned mahogany escritoir, of which, in the course of his survey, the latter had expressed a very significant admiration; and, three days afterwards, Quiddy sold a quantity of articles which to him were useless (but which chiefly had been the particular favourites of the "poor dear departed") for a trifle more than he was to pay for the whole. And here again, the gains were, of course, the result of "sheer industry."

Quiddy being now all alone in the business, ordered to be painted in large letters over his door, "QUIDDY AND Co."—the visionary Co. appearing to give respectability, breadth, and stability to his concern; and being also alone in the house, which he found too large for his own purposes—for his small establishment consisted merely of a small cheap boy, who assisted him in the shop, and a smaller and cheaper girl, who supplied the place which Janet had vacated by accepting certain Hundreds more substantial than the Chiltern—he exhibited in his window a notice of "Lodgings to Let." Quiddy did not in addition to this announcement put an advertisement into the "*Times*," but the gossips, male and female, of the neighbourhood, served him quite as well: for, "Why, if Mr. Quiddy isn't letting his first floor!" ran from one to another of them with the rapidity of wild-fire—the circumstance occupying their thoughts and conversation till displaced by some other local event of equal importance. The fortunate consequence to our hero of the determination to disencumber himself of the superfluous portion of his mansion, we shall presently see; in the meantime, behold him in the mental agony of bringing forth a letter.

It was ten o'clock; his household had retired to rest; and the shop—(or the *divan*, as it would be termed in these march-of-intellect days, of which one

remarkable, but anomalous characteristic is the love of calling things by their *wrong* names)—was closed. In solitude and silence, at the table in the old back-parlour, sat Quiddy. Before him lay a sheet of paper, on which he was looking with “lack-lustre eye;” at his side was a small dictionary, ready to act as an auxiliary in case of any important emergency; in one hand he held a pen, the feather-end of which he was sedulously nibbling, whilst the other hand was occasionally employed in the inspiring process of scratching his head. He had been thus engaged for some time; yet it must be confessed that he had composed the opening portion of his epistle with considerable facility, that portion consisting of the words, “Dear Janet.” But, as it will sometimes happen to the best-intentioned letter-writers, there he stuck. At length, after many mighty throes, the “*cunning* epistle” (to use an antiquated phrase in its modern sense) appeared, in matter and form following—the orthographical errors occurring, contrary to custom, in the *shorter* words, for which the writer trusted to the fidelity of his own memory; whilst in every case of doubt, respecting those of startling dimensions—that is to say, of three or more syllables, he prudently referred for information to his friend, little Entick:—

“Dear Janet,

“This comes open to find you saif a rivd and in good hellit as i can not say it leafs Me. It is impossible to describ how lonesum I feal—and feal more greaft than ever that the poor dear departed is gorn to a better plaice, *witch I wish it was the contrary*, but it is no use to wish a Bout them as is ded. But when Mr. Grubb come to Me to settel a Bout the furniture 4 days a go it all most brock My art to hear you was set of and not come to tak a Leaf off your *oldest* and BEST frend tho i rejice in your good forting and that is sum consolation, *tho they have been uncommon ard*

with me a Bout the furniture, tho' it was ther dooty to get the hist price they could for you, as it was your propitty and as it is for your advantage I don't complane but rejice in it for your sack tho it is raythur hard in them upon a young Beginer. Mr. Grub did not say 1 word to Me as to how your afairs is arraigned [Didn't he !] *"but as i sapos your littel safeings was run a way with for your expencis to Abbydin"* [!] *"and as i sapos your trusteeas wont give you no money as long as they can help it so if so be you want 20 or 30 pound for any thing"* [Considerate and disinterested ! 8l. 17s. 9d. he could have added] *"i will lend it you to pay me when you lik without interest tho when ever you get such a sum from them i would advise you to put it out to interest to sum old frend you can trust as it is not saif to keep so much money a Bout you in a strange contry [!]* And now Janet i have a word of frenly advis to give you witch is to set up in sum way off biznis that is if you air resolve to stay ware you air and i should recommend *my line* as i can stand your frend *most disinterested* as i would suply you with stock *at prim cost* as far as a 100 pound *without charging you a farething proffit* to pay me when you cann and if this is not being a disinterested frend i dont no what is, but you can not expec nothing less from your

"true and disinterested frend

"till deth

"PHINEAS QUIDDY."

"P.S—As this is a nydee jist cum into my ed *dont rite to no Body in London a Bout it whatsoever* and dont you be advised by *strangurs in Abbydin* against what i say who is naturally your oldest frend and a brother i may say so rite to me by return.

"I open this agin to say *dont rite my advis to no Boddy here* and dont trust to *straingurs* who is naturally interested [to purswad you not to open in thare line in

opposition to them] to advis you more for *thair* good than *youern* as it stands to reson in course, and not like your disinterested old frend.

“P. Q.”

The words between brackets in the postscript Quiddy carefully erased, and substituted for them those that follow—recollecting that they betrayed a greater knowledge of Janet’s contemplated arrangements than was at all consistent with his innocent professions of ignorance in the matter.

The letter was folded, wafered, and sealed with his arms (his heraldic distinctions, at that time, being simply the impression of the thumb of his right hand), and addressed to “Miss Gray, at Mr. Sweenie’s, Queen-street, Aberdeen.”

The epistle from the gentleman to the lady was crossed on the road by one from the lady to the gentleman.

“A letter already,” thought Quiddy, as he looked at that which the postman had just delivered to him ; “why she can’t have received mine yet. Double—and post paid ! I’ll be hanged if she hasn’t some favour to ask of me, or she wouldn’t be such a fool as to do *that*. Well, let’s see what it may be. If it don’t cost nothing and an’t *very* troublesome I’ll oblige her : it can’t do me no harm in *that* case.”

The letter was short and simple (at which Phineas was not sorry), containing nothing more than the following words—and a twenty-pound bank-note—at which Phineas was very glad.

“Mr. Quiddy,

“As I have rot to Doctor McSquills agreble to promis to let him no I arivt here saf and well last nit, I thot you mit tak it onkind if I did not let you no too. I op you will not refus what I send as I have got a gradil moor mony than I no what to doo with and you was not left any mony at all in the will tho you had

been in the fammaly longer than me so I look upon it like as your doo—yet praps its rong of me to queschin what my kind missis thot rite to do—and if you refus it you will make me very onhappy. Ples not to tell Doctor McSquills about what I send you as he might be angry with me for it, and praying God to make you good and appy

“I remain,

“JANET GRAY.”

“Pocrips.—Ples be *sure* you don’t tell Doctor McSquills, *nor nobody else.*”

We do not expect that these letters will ever be honoured with a niche in the collection of “Elegant Epistles;” we give them merely as illustrative of the minds and characters of their writers: the one, hypocritical, tortuous, designing, and self-interested; the other generous and simple, truthful and direct. Quiddy’s commentary on the letter of his fair correspondent may serve as a further illustration of these points.

“Well,” thought he, gloating on the unexpected treasure; “well, this *is* luck! It is very kind of her, to be sure—and yet, she owns, it’s no more than my due;—no more it is, considering all things;—and she says herself she should not have known what to do with it, so she is none the worse for sending it to me. And, as she says, moreover, it would make her very unhappy if I refuse it, why, I’ll keep it. Now, I wonder whether she got my letter before she wrote this. No, she couldn’t. In the first place, there wasn’t time; in the next, if she had, she wouldn’t have given me the money out and out, when I only hinted to her to let me take care of it for her. Besides, she takes no notice of what I said about her setting up in business, or of my hints about the furniture. Well,” continued he, rubbing his hands with delight, “considering what she has done *before* she has received it, all that will be

sure to take with her *afterwards* : for I took uncommon pains with that letter, and an uncommon clever one it certainly was. As to what Mr. Grubb said about her wanting them to let me have the furniture for nothing, that wasn't true, or she would have taken good care to write me of it, for nobody likes to hide their candle under a bushel.—Now, come, I'll acknowledge the receipt of this at once, and then that's done with."

Of this letter, which was precisely such a one as might be expected from the writer, and which, amongst other things, declared his heroic resolution to keep what she had sent him, rather than make her unhappy, we give merely the—

"P.S. As i would not get you into trouble upon no a Count, you may trust to my oner I never wil mention a syllable to Doctor McSquills nor nobody in the world, *nor about any thing you ever send me in futur.*"

A post or two afterwards brought another letter from Janet, acknowledging the receipt of Quiddy's first ; and which, gratefully and unaffectedly thanking him for his advice and kind offers of assistance and service, concluded by informing him that in all matters of importance to her, she considered herself bound to act according to the directions of her trustees. There being no invitation to Quiddy to continue the correspondence, but, on the contrary, a cold intimation that, if at any future time she should have anything to *say* (which he pleasantly interpreted into *send*), she would write to *him* ; he, now knowing the resolution and sincerity of Janet's character, felt his "uncommon clever letter" to be a failure (so far as its objects were concerned), and could only lament that so much fine epistolary talent should have been wasted.

CHAPTER XII.

Our Hero takes a Lodger, a Step which in its results may prove to his Advantage—Country Life to a thorough Londoner—A new view of “Sheer Industry” opened—A Digression touching the prevalent Habit of Smoking.

It may, perchance, be within the memory of that oblivious personage whose testimony is usually invoked to prove that he remembers nothing of such or such an event; or, that, to the best of his forgetfulness, the occurrence of yesterday stands without a parallel—(we mean “the oldest inhabitant,” whose memory, for the reason that he *is* the oldest, may naturally be somewhat the worse for wear)—*he* may, peradventure, remember some solitary instance of the “taking in and doing for” a single gentleman, leading, in the end, to the great benefit of the adventurer.

Scarcely had Quiddy exhibited his placard of “Lodgings to Let,” when he received an offer for their occupation.

The applicant, Mr. Lickpenny, who for many years had lived in the neighbourhood, was a widower of sixty (for he had lately buried his wife); and who, having saved some hundreds of pounds, and possessing, besides, that negative, but (by some people considered) inestimable treasure, “neither chick nor child,” had retired from his business of a shoemaker. He was a spare, pale man, with a slight tendency to pulmonary consumption; and of a mild, meek disposition, as is not unfrequently the case with members of those soothing crafts, of which his, we believe, is considered to be one. Having looked around the rooms, examined the cupboards and other conveniences, and cast an eye over

the furniture that remained in them, he took a seat, and thus began :—

“The apartments are not *over*-furnished, Mr. Q.”

“Why—no,” said Quiddy, timidly—for he had dispossessed them of almost every article which was not absolutely indispensable to the merest convenience.

“I’m a quiet man, and don’t require much,” continued Lickpenny ; “so if you will consider the circumstance in the rent, why, perhaps, we may come together, Mr. Q.”

“Well, well,” said Quiddy, in a tone and manner intended to be indicative of his disposition to treat with fairness and liberality, “I dare say we shan’t fall out about that.”

This phrase being the usual preliminary of a hardly-contested bargain, there was, of course, a good deal of haggling on both sides ; in which encounter the tobacconist had unquestionably the better of the shoemaker. In the end, however, the parties came to a mutual understanding, and Mr. Lickpenny promised to take possession of the lodgings on the evening of that day. Quiddy scribbled a sort of agreement, which the other contracting party having willingly signed, he deposited it safely in his pocket.

“And now, Mr. L.,” said Quiddy, “as we have clenched the nail, let me ask how it was you didn’t settle in the country. The whole neighbourhood said you intended to do so ; and I can’t help thinking it would have been a pleasanter thing for you than coming back to Cow-lane again, where you have lived all your life—specially now you’re your own master.”

“As to my being my own master *now*, Mr. Q., I don’t exactly understand what you mean,” said Lickpenny, evidently not relishing the implication conveyed in Quiddy’s concluding observation : “I always *was* my own master ; for though my poor, dear, lost angel of a wife did sometimes—but that’s neither here or there. I suppose, all you mean is that, as I’m now out of business, I—”

"Exactly so," said Quiddy.

"I'll tell you how it is, Mr. Q.," continued the other. "A man who has passed a Lunnun life all his days, has but a dull time of it when he comes to settle down in the country. I've tried it, and it won't do. No, no; habit's habit. After slaving in my shop six days of the week, it used to be a pleasure to me to go out two or three miles into the country on a Sunday. Then, when rambling about the fields, without seeing so much as a row of houses—ay, sometimes for as long as five minutes together—and drinking in the fresh air, as one may say, I used to think that if ever I should get rid of the turmoil of business, a country life would be the life for me! Well;—as soon as I was a free man, I took a lodging at Islington—and what *can* be more rural! for there's Pockock's Fields, Barnsbury Park, and—. Well; I rambled about from morning till night, having nothing else to do, and thinking I should never be tired of it; but, after the first two or three weeks, I sighed to be among my busy haunts again."

"I never knowed you'd got an aunt," said Quiddy, innocently.

Without noticing the interruption, the other continued:—

"And, then, when a rainy day happened to come! Oh, Mr. Q.?" (with more of a groan than a sigh), "a rainy day in the country to a Lunnener! And then, the Sunday! Formerly, when Sunday came it was my holiday: I used to go somewhere into the country:—*now*, I had nowhere to go—I *was* in the country. I declare to you, Mr. Q., that one Sunday, after dinner, I walked up to Shoreditch, by way of change, and passed the whole afternoon in strolling about the empty streets in this neighbourhood—and a great relief it was to me. Tarts are tarts, and very nice things in their way they are, and not a boy but likes them; but 'prentice him to a pastrycook, and give him nothing but tarts from one week's end to another—! So is the

country to a thoroughbred Lunnuner, Mr. Q.—a sort of heaven to visit, but a place quite the contrary to live in. I've tried it, I tell you, and know it."

This truth, tested in the present case by an experiment on a small and humble scale, will be acknowledged (though perhaps unwillingly) by many a man who, retired from an exciting profession, an active employment, or a busy trade, has betaken himself to some distant sylvan retreat, where, instead of becoming that which he had fondly hoped to be, but for which habit has disqualified him—a happy country-gentleman—he soon finds himself to be a mere discontented gentleman in the country. The success of the experiment is the exception; its failure the rule. Some, like Lickpenny, or like honest, good-humoured Frank Townly, the retired tea-broker, will confess this:—

"Nice place this, eh?" said Frank to a friend who went to pay him a Christmas visit at his retreat in Somersetshire. "Charming place—ha! ha! ha!—mean to sell it. Famous hunting, fine fishing, capital shooting—but that's all. Tried it, but no go—ha! ha! ha! See here," continued he, pointing to an almanac, and reading from it, "'Twenty-first of December, *shortest day*'—no such thing here—but that's a *town* almanac—ha! ha! ha! In the country we have long days, and longer, and the longest; but for the last two years and six months out of the mortal three years that here I have been, I've seen no such thing as a short one—ha! ha! ha! Mean to sell it—advertise it as the property of a gentleman about to retire to London—ha! ha! ha! Use is second nature: have found *that* out. Hills?—give me Cornhill. Gardens?—give me Covent-garden. No, no; no go, this, for an old London bird like me—ha! ha! ha!"

Some are ashamed to confess the disappointment which they really feel, and would entice others to follow their example—like the fox in the fable, who had lost his tail and who endeavoured (by expatiating

on the beauty and advantage of being without one) to induce his fellow-foxes to dock theirs. These remind one of the anecdote of the old French marquis and the chimney-sweeper who, in the first French Revolution, were going in the same cart to the guillotine. The marquis, with tranquil dignity was taking his snuff as composedly as if he had been going to a levee at the Tuileries ; while the sweep was howling and screaming in a manner that made it tolerably clear that he did not altogether relish his journey.

"Mais, Monsieur," politely said the marquis, "si ça ne vous arrange pas, au moins n'en dégoûtez pas les autres."

So is it with them : they are unwilling to "dégoûter les autres."

To return.—After musing for a minute or two Lickpenney exclaimed—

"Mr Q., a thought strikes me ! I am not as young as I was the day I came into the world by a good sixty years. For the greater part of that time I was a fag ; and now, having had the good luck to get out of business, and the *misfortune* to bury my poor angel of a wife, why, I've nothing to think of but pleasure, and how to make myself happy and comfortable for the rest of my days—and high time I should. I've enough to live on, and have neither chick nor child. Now—I hate trouble, I know nothing about house-keeping—that was always my poor angel's affair—and don't want the care of it, if I did. What say you ? Couldn't we contrive that I should board with you ?"

"In course, Mr. L., you mean by paying for it ?"—said Quiddy, cautious to prevent the possibility of any misunderstanding on the subject.

"In *course*," replied the other.

"Why," said Quiddy, who, upon a moment's reflection, saw that he might gain some advantage from the arrangement—"Why, Mr. L., I don't see why not. Anything is to be done for money. Besides, Mr.

L., where *one* can eat, *two* can eat—that's my maxim."

"And an excellent maxim it is," said Lickpenny ; drily adding—"always supposing there's enough to eat, Mr. Q., and the second likes what is provided."

"*In* course," again said Quiddy, "as he pays for it."

"You'd find me easy to please, Mr. Q. : notwithstanding, I own that I'm partial to having my own way. I always—that's to say, generally—had it even in my poor dear angel's time—in reason, I mean in reason ; and now that I'm *quite* my own master, have enough to live on, and have neither chick nor child, as I said before, why—come, Mr. Q. : what say you as to terms?"

The repeated allusion to his having neither chick nor child, although perhaps uttered by the speaker without any particular intention, did not pass unheeded by Quiddy.

"Oh ! as to terms," said the latter ; "why, as I said before, we shan't fall out about them."

And, as before, there ensued a sharpish discussion ; though, on the part of the tobacconist, certain trifling concessions were granted more readily than in the previous instance. At length, all points were arranged, even to the exchanging of the small serving-maid for one of rather larger growth, who should be capable of adding to her other duties that of cook to the establishment.

And now, behold we Mr. L. domiciled with Mr. Q., where for the present we will leave him.

It happened about this time, that, one Sunday afternoon, Quiddy, in the course of his rambles among the more rural and sequestered spots of Bethnal-green, observed a small patch of ground (enclosed within four walls, having a door at one angle) which was to be let. What had been its original purpose we know

not. Quiddy walked around it, and around it, looked at it again and again, and fell into a deep meditation.

"The very thing," he said, as he slowly walked homewards; "the very thing." And early next morning he was with the proprietor of the small patch of ground, of whom he presently agreed to rent it.

Now for what purpose could Quiddy possibly want the small patch of ground at Bethnal-green? It was too small to build upon to any advantage, nor was Quiddy suspected of a taste for gardening. As for flowers, he never "saw what *good* they were of," and daisies and buttercups, he thought, were of no other use, and grew for no other purpose, than to afford to idlers in the fields the amusement of knocking their heads off. Now, we are not of that super-refined sect of humanity-mongers who hold it to be sinful to pluck a flower; or (to adopt their silly jargon) "*commit floricide*," because "for anything we are convinced of to the contrary, flowers may be susceptible of pain:" as soon should we abstain from the eating of gooseberry-tart from a horror of being an accessory after the fact to the crime of *berricide*, by the wilful and malicious baking of live gooseberries in a pie. Notwithstanding, we consider a love of flowers to be, in most cases, indicative of a kindly and gentle disposition and a refined taste, as the dislike or disregard of them is, to a certain degree, evidence of coarseness and brutality. To repeat his own witty saying, the only flower Mr. Q. ever cared for was a boiled cauliflower. For what purpose, then, *could* he have hired that little patch of ground?

No sooner had Quiddy taken possession of his small domain, than he caused to be erected in one corner of it a drying kiln, whilst the remainder he planted with dock and cabbages.

And, what then? Why, not very long afterwards there appeared in his window a sheet of paper, on which he had inscribed with his own hand—for,

although he did not pretend to spell like a dictionary, and was somewhat loose in his syntax, he wrote a good round hand, which, in his jocose way, he was wont to boast a blind man might read as well without spectacles as with—

QUIDDY AND CO.

HAS JUST IMPORTED

A SMALL QUANTITY OF

RALE HAVANY SEGARS.

The lower part of the sheet was ornamented with a swan, which he had flourished without once taking his pen from the paper! This work of art might however have passed with great credit for a goose, or a duck, or indeed for almost any other bird; but as he intended it to represent a swan, and a swan, moreover, he chose to call it, why, a swan let it be.

Oh! prescribe to the fastidious a gentle course of albums and of scrap-books, and, like us, how tolerant would they become!

The habit of cigar-smoking was not then, as it is at present, common to one in a hundred of the gentlemen, and twenty in every score of the blackguards of London. The harlequinade trick of, *Presto!* transforming dirty, squalid Swallow-street into one of the most splendid thoroughfares* perhaps in the world, had not yet been performed; and that splendid thoroughfare not then existing, it may be proved, by the simplest logical process, that it could not have been infested nightly, and almost daily, as it now is, by foreign couriers, *valets de place*, and low gamblers—the refuse, in short, of all countries—each one moustached, be-whiskered, and be-tipped; his hands, when not in another person's pockets, thrust into his own; his arms

* We mean Regent-street—this for the benefit of country folks.

a-kimbo ; his lank and greasy hair falling over his shoulders, and a cigar stuck in a corner of his mouth.

We stop to make a remark. That the nasty fellows we have described, should be considered as "the glass of fashion and the mould of form" by the lowest class of London clerks and shopmen (and the remark applies to the lowest class alone) does not much astonish us, for even monkeys imitate best that which is most extravagant. But that they should be adopted as models for imitation in dress, appearance, and manner, by any *gentleman*, does astonish us very greatly indeed. And it is singular that it should be only amongst English gentlemen, who justly enjoy the reputation of being the truest and finest gentlemen in Europe, that a fashion should occasionally prevail of imitating the common and the vulgar. Some years ago, the language, manners, and appearance, nay, the very habits of stage-coach drivers, were the mode with many of them ; and so far was this carried, that a certain one is said to have injured a fine set of teeth by causing a hole to be bored between two of the front, in order to enable him to spit to as great a distance, and in as knowing a way, as Dick (somebody) the Oxford coachman. This fashion, however, was less offensive than that which has occasioned the present digression, because it was confined to a comparatively small number, and could not, like it, be carried at all times into most places.

Once upon a time, when dress and good-manners were more observed in public places than they are at present, Lord North thanked a gentleman who came in boots and spurs into a box at the theatre, in which were some ladies, for his polite consideration *in having left his horse at the door*. We know not exactly that we ought to thank one who comes into company, reeking with the stale fumes of tobacco, for having left his cigar behind him : the fresh odour of the latter might probably be the more agreeable.

The habit of cigar-smoking, we have said, was not then so common as at present: pipes were used—(pardon this display of antiquarian research, but we are *not yet* dubbed F.S.A.)—and smoking, in any way, was practised by men only. As for the silly hobble-dehoy, who may now be seen swaggering about the streets, and, with an assumed air of manhood, puffing their filthy smoke into the face of every one they meet, they would just have been whipped for the offence and sent to bed without their suppers. And here, for the benefit of any future inquirer into the origin of popular phrases, let us record that to these disgusting precocities was first applied—"Does your mother know you're out?"

Notwithstanding these seeming impediments to any considerable sale of his real Havannah cigars, Quiddy did, in fact, dispose of them both largely and rapidly. He had certain customers whom he particularly favoured; and, when he had a commodity which he could "*conscientiously* recommend as being *prime*," he would let them have it at a price very little above that which he would have charged for an inferior article. So was it with his real Havaunahs.

"This I can recommend," would he say: "I imported it myself. You know it is only the very best tobacco that is made into cigars: it's almost a sin to chop it up for the pipe; but, as you are an old customer, I don't mind letting you have half-a-pound for only threepence more than you pay for what you usually smoke."

Then, the much-obliged customer, taking a whiff, would give a knowing shake of the head and frankly acknowledge, "Well, this is something like!"—like many a pretended connoisseur smacking his lips at a glass of detestable raspberry-juice just brought from the nearest tavern, and which his kind entertainer is sorry to assure him (and he does so with a sigh) is

nearly the last of the small, but choice, batch which he himself received direct from Lafitte's.

It was a curious coincidence that, in proportion as the sale of the "real Havannah" increased, the visits of Quiddy to his small patch of ground became more frequent; while the amount of his purchases at the house of Pigtle and Chor, the wholesale tobacconists in Bishopsgate-street, diminished. Now and then, too, would he be so fortunate as to receive a small quantity of Virginia, or other tobacco, of a "*very* superior quality"—in the raising of which, it might be pleasing to him to reflect that those first cousins to monkeys, and our brethren, the negroes, had not been very severely overtaken. So thriving, indeed, had his trade become, that, for the convenience, to say nothing of the dignity of the thing, he soon opened an account with Messrs. Spec, Smasher, and Straw, the bankers.

O rare "sheer industry!"

CHAPTER XIII.

Our Hero's Benevolence increases—An ingenious Expedient for lending Money to great Advantage though at fair legal Interest—By dint of disinterested Attention to his Lodger he gets into his Favour—News from Janet.

As his capital increased, Quiddy was enabled to extend the sphere of his benevolence. He could now accommodate with loans a greater number of his friends, and to a larger amount. He had long abandoned the practice with which he had started in his financial career, of lending insignificant sums to his poorer customers: the profit was not commensurate with the trouble. He would now succour a distressed tradesman with the loan of a hundred, or even two hundred pounds; always taking care to receive such security as should render the smallest loss an impossibility, and

cautiously abstaining from the receipt of one single farthing beyond the legal interest. But he had in one corner of his shop a package, very neatly made up, and easily portable, containing a gross of small, tin snuff-canisters, the real value of which was about just as many pence. In all his loans this one single package played a prominent part; for it was always given as a portion of the amount, varying from a fifth to a fourth, according to circumstances; as for instance:—

“You want a hundred pounds,” he would say; “very well, you shall have it, and I shall take at the rate of five per cent. interest—no more. But I cannot let you have the whole sum in cash: you must receive twenty-pounds’-worth of canisters, in part.”

This arrangement being perfectly well understood by the accommodated party, he would pocket eighty pounds in money (*minus* the interest), and carry away the little package as the representative of the remainder. Having walked halfway down the street, he would return, and innocently inquire whether Mr. Quiddy happened to want a gross of tin canisters; and the latter answering in the affirmative, the vendor would receive a few shillings in payment for them. They would then be restored to their place, there to remain till again required for a similar purpose. And thus had Quiddy the gratification of reflecting that, by his benevolent aid, was the inevitable ruin of an unfortunate tradesman delayed—till a few weeks later.

It is by no means certain that Phineas Quiddy was the originator of this ingenious method of “cheating the devil.” We recollect in Paris a young French officer of the body-guard coming one evening into a room full of company, gay and laughing, and holding a mouse-trap above his head.—“*Qui en veut des sourisères?*” cried he; “Who wants any mouse-traps? I have just been raising five thousand francs: and my *arabe* [the French cant-word for an usurer] has debited me with *one* thousand for as many mouse-traps. He

has given me this one for my present use, and is to supply me with the other nine hundred and ninety-nine, as I may occasionally want them."

Quiddy and his lodger had gone on very comfortably together for several weeks, and the latter had frequently expressed his perfect satisfaction at the manner in which he was treated; and well he might; for Quiddy's deference to his wants and wishes (sometimes to his own inconvenience, and, occasionally, a *little* to his cost) was surprising. How was this to be accounted for? Was it that he was becoming less intensely selfish than heretofore, or that a single spark of generosity had found its way into his bosom? Could he have been influenced by Lickpenny's occasional allusions to his misfortune of "having neither chick nor child;" or, by the circumstance that Lickpenny himself was (to use Quiddy's expression) "an unnatural son;" so that, should he die intestate, there would be no legal representatives to claim his property, which, moreover, was all funded? Of this last fact, together with its amount (about eighteen hundred pounds) he had, by some indirect means, become informed; but he always carefully concealed from his lodger his knowledge of it.

One evening when they were smoking their pipes together, Quiddy, with some abruptness, expressed his wonder at never having known a relative of Lickpenny's to visit him, and inquired whether he had any.

After some hesitation, Lickpenny, adopting a periphrastic and circumlocutory form of words of exquisite delicacy, replied—

"I'll tell you how it is, Mr. Q. You must know it was not till after I had popped my head into the world, that my father and mother happened to recollect that, somehow or other, they had quite forgot to get married; and, as they both died very shortly afterwards, why, there wasn't time for them to repair the omission.

Now, it is probably owing to that circumstance that, properly speaking, as my lawyer says, I never had any relatives at all."

"It is a thousand pities you haven't a son," said Quiddy. "I don't mean a mere boy; that would be more plague than pleasure; but a young man of—of about my age, like: it would be a great comfort to you, at your time of life."

"That's all a chance, Mr. Q.; it might be, or it might not: all would depend upon his conduct. Yet I own I sometimes feel the want of one."

"Not so much since you have been here, I *hope*, for I try all I can to make you happy and comfortable. I say, Mr. L.," continued he, with a simper, "it's very odd, but one can't help one's feelings, you know; but, really—really, I do somehow feel for you at times for all the world *like* a son. I dare say you will laugh at me for it; but I always *was* a *very* great fool about my feelings."

Affectionate creature!

"I don't see anything to laugh at," said the other; "on the contrary, I take it very kind of you; and, to say the truth, I have a sort of liking for you: you are attentive to me; you treat me well, and—"

"And quite disinterested, *that* you *must* know," said Quiddy, interrupting him; "it isn't as if—"

"If what?"

"Why, as I said, *when I was told it by somebody*, just after you came to live here—'It was the best thing he could do,' says I, 'to sink all his money in an annuity for his own life, seeing as how he has got nobody to leave it to; he gets a better income by it, and the old gentleman is right to take care of Number One. And then,' says I, 'when he's gone, all's gone: so he's in no fear of people pretending to like him for what they may get. If, indeed, he had children of his own, or anybody at all he cared about, it would have been a different matter,' says I; 'in that case he would

not have sunk his money ; he would have made a will, for it's a great comfort to know what is to become of one's money after one is dead and gone.' "

"Mr. Q.," said Mr. Lickpenny, "I don't know who may have told you that, but *I* can tell you—"

He checked himself, and paused—knocking the ashes out of his pipe, and looking into his tobacco-box, which he found to be empty.

"But *what*, Mr. L.?" inquired Quiddy, drawing a little closer to the old man.

"That I want some tobacco," was the reply.

Quiddy went into the shop and filled the box.

"And now, Mr. L.," said he, as he resumed his seat and returned the box, "you must do me a favour—I have often thought of asking it, but I have been afraid of offending you. It actually goes to my heart to charge you for your little modicums of snuff and tobacco—it isn't pleasant between friends. Now you *must* allow me, for the future, to fill your boxes for you in a friendly way ; or—there's the shop, and you have only to help yourself whenever you please—the real Havannah or anything you choose. Now, *will* you, Mr. L. ? It's no object out of such a quantity, indeed it an't."

"Why, really, Mr. Q., that is very handsome of you ; but, indeed—well—I take your offer : there will always be some way or other of making the matter up."

"Don't talk of that, or you'll hurt my feelings. I wouldn't have *you* think me selfish or interested ; for, whatever *that* Doctor McSquills may say, if I have a good quality at all, it is that I— By the by, what were you a-going to say just now, Mr. L.?"

"Ay, who informed you that I—"

"Oh, about the annuity ! Why it was—no, it wasn't, neither—and really I can't recollect."

"Well, it is of no consequence," said Lickpenny,

dropping the subject, which was not afterwards resumed.

* * * * *

"Bill for payment, sir ; forty-eight fifteen," said a banker's clerk, who entered the shop one morning, and drew from a large black-leathern pocket-book, of plethoric appearance, one of those oblong slips of paper, whose insultingly ironical "*Please to pay*," means, as authoritatively as a command of the Sultan Mahomet Fuz—"pay whether it please you or no." Oh, the insidious, the wicked mock-humility of these things !

"Ah, *I* know," said Quiddy, slowly and sulkily taking his cash-box from a small iron closet in a corner of the shop ; "*I* know : for the furniture. A twelve-month soon comes round, but I'm prepared for it. [All this he muttered while counting out notes to the amount.] I *could* give you a check on my banker—for I keeps a banker, Mister—but I suppose you'd as soon take cash. The cursed old Jezebel ! and that artful, legacy-hunting young devil ! I *did* think she'd have let me off paying for the rotten old sticks, when the time came round—it's the least she could have done. Not that I care much about it, for, thank my stars, the money's no great object to me. Only I *should* have vally'd it just for the look of the thing. Hows'-ever, it's a very hard case—very ! a regular grievance, I may say. I'll tell you the rights of it, and be judged by you, Mister."

The latter part of this speech was delivered while Quiddy, with his back towards the banker's clerk, was engaged in replacing his cash-box in the iron closet, and carefully locking the latter ; and during this time the clerk (having taken the money and receipted the bill, and, as is not unlikely, having something of more importance to attend to than Quiddy's "grievances") had left the house.

"Well, that's what I call vastly polite !" muttered

Quiddy, on perceiving that his intended victim had escaped.

Of all earthly bores, the most deadly, perhaps, is a man with a grievance; and to one of these, there is no disappointment more severe than the escape of a listener whom he thought he had fairly hooked.

He continued to mutter, "*Vastly* polite!"—"Ungrateful old hag!"—"The toadying, legacy-hunting young hussy! I can't abide such mean, such interested, such—"

Here his soliloquy was interrupted by the wheezing cough of old Lickpenny, who had not yet risen; and with almost the celerity of thought, Quiddy was at his bedside.

For some months past, the old man's ailment (pulmonary consumption) had been on the increase; and partly for this reason, and partly because he did not know what else to do with his time, he was in the habit of lying late abed.

It is no uncommon thing to hear some sexagenarian complain that newspapers are not as distinctly printed nowadays as they used to be: that theatres are not as well adapted for seeing and hearing as formerly they were: that public amusements, generally, are not as amusing now as he can remember them to have been: that even the very nature and character of women have deteriorated, they being no longer such "nice creatures," nor by any means so captivating and affectionate as they used to be in his younger days;—with a long catalogue of other complaints of changes, all for the worse, in things in general, but chiefly in those that more particularly affect the senses. But all people, of all ages, complain of the alterations in the seasons; while Lickpenny (having nothing in the world to occupy his time) was positively certain, either that the duration of the hour had much increased, or that more than four-and-twenty were squeezed into one day—for that

the day *now* seemed to him as if it never would come to an end.

"Daddy," said Quiddy, in a tone of extreme tenderness (for Daddy was the term of endearment he was wont to bestow upon the sick fundholder)—"Daddy, I am afraid you an't quite so well this morning—I heard your poor dear cough, and came immediately to see how you do."

It may here be mentioned that tedium (occasioned by want of occupation), together with his increasing illness and infirmities, had rendered the old man irritable and impatient, and occasionally morose; so that it must be allowed that Mr. Quiddy did not lead a very pleasant life with him. However, as most people have their motives for enduring that which may not be altogether agreeable to them, we must suppose that he, in the case in question, had his.

"Come to get me up because you want your breakfast, I suppose," said Lickpenny.

"Oh no, indeed, Daddy," said Quiddy, with fawning submissiveness; "you know I would not have breakfasted without you if you hadn't come down for a month—no, not if you'd never come down."

Herein, perhaps, did the disinterested speaker "protest too much"—but, in a position like his, it may probably be in the nature of things that it should be so.

"Well, what's o'clock?"

"A *leetle* past eleven, Daddy."

"Well, I shall come down presently; and, d'ye hear? don't keep me waiting a minute for my breakfast when I'm ready for it: you know I can't bear to be kept waiting for my meals."

"I know it, Daddy," was the meek reply.

"And, d'ye hear? wait breakfast till I come: you know I can't bear to take my meals by myself."

"You know I always do, Daddy; though I must say it is sometimes uncommon inconvenient."

"Well—I pay for having my own way, and I *will* have my own way. Even in my poor dear angel's lifetime I always—sometimes—so if it does not suit you, why—Well; no matter: I'm an unhappy old man! nobody to care for me; neither chick nor child; no one to—"

"Now that's very unkind of my old Daddy. An't I like a son to you? I'm sure you sometimes say I am."

"Well; perhaps you are not so bad, after all. Go—stop—and, d'ye hear?—Nothing—I forget what I was going to say."

And Quiddy left the room, grumbling inwardly, and wishing his "Daddy" in the company of the "poor dear angel," wherever she might be: at the same time vituperating pulmonary consumption on account of its culpable inactivity, as a disgrace to the catalogue of contrivances for despatching old people from this world to the next.

This may serve, once for all, as a specimen of the slavery to which our "sheer-industry" friend thought it a good speculation to submit. Whether his virtuous resignation was destined to be in the end its own reward, or to be recompensed by something if not so purely honorary, yet quite as useful, we shall in due time see. Meanwhile his house was turned topsy-turvy: his domestic arrangements (which had all been admirably contrived to afford the greatest attainable degree of comfort to Mr. Phineas Quiddy, and to that gentleman alone) were overturned; his usual habits and mode of life, as well as the recreations (such as they had been) of his leisure hours he was compelled to forego; his— In short, had he possessed a soul, he would scarcely have dared to call it his own, had his lodger thought fit to question his property in it.

A few days after this—that is to say, a few days after that upon which Quiddy received the unwelcome visit of the banker's clerk—the post brought him a

letter from Aberdeen. We need scarcely say it was from Janet.

"What can this be about, I wonder," thought he. "She hasn't wrote to me for a twelvemonth—not since she sent me that twenty pound. What can she have to write about now? Oh! I dare say it is to tell me the trustees have sent her the money for the furniture, which the carneying creechur would never have had if I had bemean'd myself to earwig the old woman as she did.—Well—let's see."

The letter being post-paid, he did not immediately perceive that it was charged as double; his astonishment, therefore, was the greater when on opening it he found it to contain an order upon a London banker for forty-eight pounds fifteen shillings! To him this was the most important portion of its contents: the rest was merely as follows:—

"Aberdeen,
"the — of —.

"Mr. Quiddy,

"I hav not rot you sens the last time not haven nothen to trobel you a Bowt. as you no Doctor McSquills is my prensipol trusty and that i *must* rite to *him* sum tims i dar say you cawl sum tims to ask him a bout me without my trobelen you with a letter on purpus. My axyden to my leg gits wussun-wuss if enny thing, and now i lay on a sofy all day, but the entrest for my muny is quit a nuf for me to live on with the family i bord and log with or it would be wuss for me as i canot work, but my elth is very good excep my axyden to my back also for witch the Lord as in all things be prased and his will be don.

" & I reman,

"JANET GRAY.

"P.S.—At the saim time I send you the muny for the fernytur witch they sent me yestaday as i always ment to do it as soon as i got it as i think it is your

rite and plesse not tell eny boddy as it will get me ill will, plesse not by no mens."

The dry style of address and subscription in this letter, as in a former one, is remarkable :

"*Mr. Quiddy,*" and "*I remain, Janet Gray.*" This will presently be accounted for.

In taking it for granted that the gentleman made an occasional inquiry concerning her, Janet assumed that he felt just sufficiently interested in her welfare to put himself to that trouble. No such thing : convinced by her last letter that his expectations of serving her, by taking a part in the management of her pecuniary affairs, were hopeless, she was no longer an object of any consideration to him. Indeed, had it been otherwise, the therapeutic process so successfully practised upon him by McSquills (which he never forgot nor forgave) had inspired him with a dislike of the doctor so intense as to be equalled only by the doctor's contempt for him ; so that these parties never willingly put themselves in each other's way. And when, upon two or three occasions, they accidentally met in the streets, Quiddy pretended not to see his medical friend—from the fear, probably, of being honoured with one of his well-remembered gripes of the hand. Some of the allusions, therefore, in the letter just received, were, as the receiver expressed it, "gibberish" to him. For the rest, he was sufficiently grateful to acknowledge that the girl had done the right thing at last by returning him his money—though he thought that, in justice, she could not have well done otherwise ; and sufficiently anxious about the accident alluded to (the effects of which were becoming worse and worse) as to wonder what might be the nature of it, and to wonder, also,—what, should she die of it, she was likely to do with all her money.

"Shall I go to that infernal doctor," thought he, "and get the rights of it, or shall I not ?"

As the history of Janet since her departure from London may be briefly told, we will tell it in the short interval occupied by Quiddy in making up his mind touching the important question by which it is occupied.

CHAPTER XIV.

Janet at Aberdeen—Apostrophe to Iron Hoops: useful Promoters of the Science of Surgery—A Hint to the Police, which they may take if they choose—Janet's Accident.

FURNISHED with a letter of introduction from one of her trustees, McEndall the undertaker, to his relations, Mr. and Mrs. Sweeney, Janet, immediately on her arrival in Aberdeen, went direct to their house; and they (having been apprized by McEndall of the visit of Janet, whom he commended, as a good girl, to their kindest care, acquainting them also with the exact state of her affairs) had prepared for her reception. They received her with open arms. Had she been a daughter of their own, their welcome of her could not have been more cordial; and poor Janet was overwhelmed with confusion, and subdued by gratitude, at the kindness and hospitality of these worthy people, when they insisted upon her taking up her abode with them—she merely paying for her board and lodging at the rate of twenty pounds *per annum*. But, as they assured her (and truly too) that, having a numerous family of their own, which they *must* provide for, and a spare room in the house which was seldom or never occupied, her presence would scarcely make a sensible addition to their expenses, Janet consented with less reluctance to accept the *obligation*, and was besides delighted to find that this arrangement would leave something of what seemed to her her vast income for other necessary expenses. We cite this, not intending to

censure the Sweenies (in whose proceeding there was in fact nothing censurable), but as an instance of Janet's simplicity.

Janet had been about three months under the roof of her new friends, in the course of which time many projects for her settlement in some business had, by turns, been canvassed and rejected. To say the truth, she herself was indifferent upon the subject: she was happy and contented with her present position: she was without care, her wants were supplied, and her time was sufficiently and agreeably occupied in assisting Mrs. Sweeney in the management of the family.

The business of Sweeney, though good, and tolerably extensive, yielding fair and reasonable profits, might, in *certain hands* and by *certain means*, have been improved by the assistance of such a capital as Janet's fortune could have supplied, and she herself been benefited in a degree by embarking it therein. It may seem strange, therefore, that it had never occurred to Sweeney to suggest to her such an arrangement. But no: having been brought up as an honest, straightforward, fair-dealing tradesman, he found that the small capital which he had inherited from his father was, with right management, sufficient for all fair purposes; and being moreover in besotted ignorance of the Queddian system of "sheer industry," he might probably have considered so large an addition to it rather as an incumbrance than a help. Yet he brought up his large family reputably; and if, at the year's end, his property had not greatly increased, he had never the ill-fortune to find that it had diminished—and for this he was grateful. As we shall have but little more to do with him, we may as well say at once that he lived to a good old age, and died (like Sandy Sanderson) immeasurably less wealthy than we find Mr. Sheer-industry Quiddy even at this present stage of his career.

Janet had been about three months in Aberdeen, and——

And here we have to state a singular fact, for which we can in no other manner account than by recollecting that Janet was a plain little body, destitute of all personal attractions. It was soon and generally known that "the lassie had got the siller;" yet, notwithstanding this temptation, the poor girl did not, in the whole course of these three months, receive a single offer of marriage—except from an exciseman, a gauger, a customhouse-officer, two tradesmen whose credits were in a rickety state, five students of the university, and an ensign and a lieutenant in the same company of a regiment quartered in the place. These two last fought in consequence of their discovered rivalry; and, in the encounter, Lieutenant McShane received his adversary's (Ensign McShindie's) ball in a diagonal line about eighteen inches above the left side of the top of the crown of his foraging-cap. But, as Janet abided by her resolution of remaining unmarried, all these suitors were in turn rejected.

It may be inquired—Did Janet ever think of her once beloved? Sometimes, when she could not help it: she never voluntarily sought the remembrance of him.

Did she still love him? No. She had discovered, beyond the possibility of doubt, that he was heartless, mean-spirited, and self-interested. Without knowing exactly "what was the matter with herself," she did, in fact, despise him; and love and contempt for the same object can scarcely be co-existent in the same bosom. She was too gentle, too humane, too religious, knowingly to despise the meanest thing that lived; and had she been aware of the true character of her present feeling towards him, she would have considered it a duty *to endeavour at least* to suppress it.

"How strange it is! I loved him once; I love him

no longer ; I never can love him again : but, then, he is *such a very odd person !*” And with this solution of the phenomenon was she satisfied, without ever attempting to seek deeper for its cause.

How, then, are we to account for her continued kindness towards him, as manifested by her gift ?

There was in fact nothing of kindness in the case. What she did was merely in the fulfilment of an act of justice, as she conceived it to be. Mrs. Sanderson, in the distribution of her property, had been, as Janet always thought, too partial towards her, and that Quiddy, as an older servant than herself, had, upon that account, deserved to be better rewarded. Under this impression, had she been allowed to divide the property equally with him, she would have done so ; but this not being the case, she considered it as incumbent on her to *reduce*, at least to the extent of her ability, the inequality.

We have seen that she was not permitted to make a present of the furniture to Mr. Q. ; but as the time for payment for its purchase approached, her entreaties to her trustees were earnest and frequent that, when he did pay, they would send the money to her, because she had “most patiklar ocation for it.” What that particular occasion was, we know ; and although they suspected it, yet the sum not being very considerable, they chose to wink at it and comply with her request—else that money would have been added by them to her store, and thereby have increased her little income.

What we have said touching the state of Janet’s heart will, coupled with the natural truth and sincerity of her character, account for the dry style of address and subscription which she adopted when writing to the charming creature who had once been the object of her affection. Without accusing her of the folly of supposing that by subscribing herself “your obedient and most humble servant,” she would thereby consign herself to you as your slave, she, nevertheless, was

so ignorant of the fictions of epistolary forms as to think she should be practising upon him an unjustifiable delusion by addressing him as "*Dear Phineas*," or even "*Dear Sir*," when he was no longer dear to her at all ; and as to assuring him, under her own hand, that she was his "affectionately," or "sincerely," or "truly," when she was in no degree either the one or the other, she would have looked upon the written falsehood as no less sinful than if she were deliberately to have uttered it to him in plain speech.

No : she addressed him as "*Mr. Quiddy*," because *Mr. Quiddy* he unquestionably was : she told him that she "*remained Janet Gray*," because she *did* remain Janet Gray. And, poor girl ! Janet Gray was she destined to remain for the rest of her brief and innocent life.

Iron hoops ! Hail to you, ye incomparable promoters of the invaluable science of surgery ! for in the ample catalogue of human contrivances and expedients tending to that benign end, there be none others like unto you. For fractured limbs and dislocated joints, attest ye Listons and ye Brodies !—bear witness, O ye venerated shades of the departed Coopers, Clines, and Abernethys, that to those beautiful and simple means, the bounteous providers of the practice which has paved your path to fame, you owe a debt of gratitude ineffable ! What is there, say, like unto them ? With them compared, fox-hunts and steeple-chases seem niggardly to furnish forth your amputation table ; gigs, tandems, patent safety-cabs, all-zealous though they be, seem slow and seldom coming to your aid ; nay, e'en the giant Genius of the Railroad quails, and bashful, bowing his stupendous head, acknowledges their dread supremacy !

But let us descend from the stilts upon which the sublimity of the subject has forcibly mounted us, and confess that (perhaps like many of our betters when

essaying a march on the slippery path of magniloquence) we find them somewhat shaky beneath us.

Accidents by all the modes we have enumerated (the first excepted) are voluntarily encountered: you may avoid them if you will, and (so far, at least, as their agency is concerned) disappoint the surgeon. If you choose to be rattled over the stones of London in a hack cab of questionable construction, or to ride a steeple-chase, it by no means follows with mathematical certainty that, in either case, you will be rewarded with the fracture of a few ribs, a dislocated shoulder, or a broken neck: the best that can be said of it is, that the chances for one or all of these results are very considerably in your favour.

So of railroads: owing to the extraordinary precautions adopted by the managers for the safety of the travelling public, an accident worthy of being classed in the newspapers under the head of "Dreadful," is now unheard of sometimes for as long as ten days together! and when one does occur, the chirurgical art is but little benefited by it, as the subjects, being generally "past surgery," are committed to the tender care of the sexton before they have time to discover that anything in the least uncomfortable has happened to them. Besides, as we have already said, since you are not compelled to travel by a railroad, or ride a steeple-chase (these being acts which you may avoid), any dismal accident that may occur to you from these means is clearly of your own seeking.

But the incomparable merit of the contrivance first mentioned, is in that *it seeks you*; hoops start upon your path, nor are they either to be foreseen or avoided. For who can avoid walking or riding through the streets of London, or those of any other city, town, or village where they may chance to be, within these realms, where the trundling of hoops is performed with that persevering industry which is in all things so honourably characteristic of this the first commercial

nation in the world; and which, like many of the most important operations of our factories, may be—advantage inappreciable!—and usually is, performed by the hands of children. And then, that not a jot of the meritorious activity of these juvenile friends of the professors of the healing art may be concealed from admiration, or unprofitably expended, their exploits are invariably exhibited in the most public and most frequented thoroughfares.

Behold! See yonder, that horse led limping along with both his knees broken. He *may be* worth about ten pounds to a hackney-coach proprietor: Mr. Shillibeer—we don't mean him—it may be libellous to name—but Mr. Paddington would not give even *that* for him to run in an omnibus; yet within these five minutes was that noble animal worth a hundred guineas!*

A crowd is assembled in Oxford-street, at the north-east corner of Regent-street.

“Be so kind, my good woman, as to inform me of the occasion of this crowd?”

“Why, sir, a little boy—a nice little fellow he was—was just trundling his hoop across the road, and, somehow or other, that horse got his fore-legs 'tangled in it, and down he went and broke both his knees.”

“And the rider? I hope he is not hurt?”

“Oh, the gentleman as was on him? Why, sir, he was nat'rally pitched over the horse's head ever such a way, and *his* head went bang up against that iron lamp-post, and his skull is quite fractured. Hows'ever, they have took him into the 'pothecary's shop there, so he'll be well took care of.”

“And the rascally little urchin who caused this frightful accident?”

“Oh, the poor little boy, sir? Why, sir, a gentleman came up and gave him a good scolding, and was

* Fact.

almost a-going to take his hoop from him ; but as the poor little fellow promised never to do so again, why, the gentleman let him keep it."

"And was there no policeman here to take the boy into custody, that he might be punished, as an example to others?"

"There's a reg'lar Tory chap for you!" cries one greasy patriot in the crowd to another. "A pretty land o' liberty we should be a-living in if a poor boy mightn't drive his hoop in the streets without the * * * police a-taking on him up for it!"

"But did no one give the little rascal a sound thrashing on the spot? That would at least have made him remember how—"

"Thrash the poor little fellow?" exclaims the woman, struck with horror at the barbarous suggestion; "why, how could he help it? It was as much the gentleman's fault as his'n: why didn't he keep out of the way when he see'd the hoop a-coming? Thrash the poor boy, indeed! One can see you haven't got no children, *you* haven't, or you would not be such a brute as to think of such a thing."

Accidents of this kind are of daily occurrence; but as they tend, as we have before said, to the promotion of an important branch of science; and as the occasion of them affords a healthful recreation to a considerable portion of the juvenile population of all places, any interference on the part of the police to prevent them, would be justly stigmatized as an act of egregious tyranny.*

It was to that simple and beautiful contrivance, an iron hoop, that poor Janet was indebted for the accident to which she alluded in her letter.

* On the first appearance of this passage in the *New Monthly Magazine*, it was copied into some of the leading newspapers, and the attention of the proper authorities was thereby called to the subject.

It was about four months after her arrival in Aberdeen (consequently about eight months prior to the time now treated of), that when taking her usual afternoon's walk, and just as she was turning the corner of a street, one of those "surgeons' friends" was driven against her, and falling, it entangled her feet. In her endeavour to extricate herself, she fell; whereby she suffered an injury of the spine and a compound fracture of the thigh. She was carried home and committed to the care of a young surgeon, who, as he was just commencing practice, could not but be delighted at so favourable an opportunity of putting his skill to the test. As to the young gentleman to whom he was indebted for it, why, since he declared he did not "go to do it," no more could be said about the matter, and complaint on the part of the sufferer would have been unreasonable; and though all the passers-by who had witnessed the accident denounced the cause of it as a dangerous nuisance, yet there being neither law nor regulation to suppress it, the young gentleman was allowed to go on whistling and trundling his hoop through half the streets of Aberdeen.

And so, for a time, must we leave poor Janet (hoping the best for her), and return to Quiddy.

CHAPTER XV.

"*Lottery: a Game of Chance*" (*vide Johnson*), therefore not a certain Road to Fortune—In his Lodger our Hero finds a useful Auxiliary in his "*Sheer-industry*" Progress—An awful Catastrophe.

"SHALL I go to that infernal doctor," thought Quiddy, "and get the rights of it, or shall I not?"

After arguing the point with himself for some time, he determined that, as his knowledge of the exact nature of the accident could not make it either better

or worse: that, as he might be rebuked for his indifference in never having till now made any inquiry concerning his former companion, or be questioned as to whether or not he had ever received any direct communication from her, by which questioning he might be betrayed to divulge the secret of the remittances she had made him—which for the world he would not disobey her by doing: that, as the doctor was not sufficiently his friend to give him the information he desired touching the material point, namely, how Janet was likely to dispose of her property, *in case*—; and that, in short, as he was not likely to get anything by the visit but a disagreeable reception, it would be safer not to venture it. So he was content for the present to remain in his ignorance, trusting to chance for his enlightenment. Had he made an inquiry concerning the first point, he would have been informed that the limb so dreadfully fractured had, in the first instance, been badly set, and subsequently so injudiciously treated, that, except by the loss of it (to which Janet would by no means consent) it would, most probably, be her fate to linger through a life of inactivity and pain.

Avarice, or the love of accumulating, is not common to youth: if they love money, it is for the pleasure, not of hoarding, but of spending it. There certainly is more than one Phineas Quiddy in the world, but, thank Heaven! the world is not made up of Quiddys. No: avarice is essentially the passion of old age, and develops itself in proportion as the other passions subside; nor scarcely ever does it attain to its maturity till the power of enjoying those is extinct. Byron's

“So, for a good old-gentlemanly vice,
I think I will take up with avarice,”

might have served as a motto to this chapter.

Lickpenny perceiving that his infirmities increased, and that his capacity for enjoyment diminished in about

an equal proportion ; and reflecting that his income being already more than sufficient for his wants, he naturally thought that, under all these circumstances, the wisest thing he could do would be to worry his heart out by endeavours to augment it. But how ? He had been a very expert shoemaker, but unluckily nature had not endowed him, like Quiddy, with a genius for finance. Having quitted business, he would not resume it : besides, the snail's profit of fair trade was too slow to keep up with the march of his new-born desire, or he might have proposed to embark a portion of his property in his landlord's business, which he could not but perceive to be, *somehow or other*, an unusually thriving one. Dashing speculation he was afraid of, as by that he would risk the loss of—we intend no unworthy pun upon his late useful craft—the loss of his all. Lotteries, those grand schemes for making a fortune in a hurry, he had tried. In every lottery that was drawn he had purchased a share of a ticket, because (as he was wont to observe) there was no other means which afforded you a reasonable hope of obtaining so large a return for your money : moreover, he wisely argued that as *somebody* must get the great prize, why, *he* had as good a chance for it as another. But, by singular ill-fortune, it always happened that Lickpenny's ticket either was drawn a blank, or, more provoking still, it came up a poor stunted thing, which had the impertinence to assume the airs of a prize, because, forsooth, it entitled the lucky holder to receive back somewhat less than the amount of his original adventure. Once, indeed, he did gain the sixteenth of a thousand pound prize ! But what of that ? That was not the one for which he had bargained with Lady Fortune, as she must have been perfectly aware : he therefore looked upon this trifling catch as a direct command from the lady—

“To make assurance doubly sure,
And take a bond of” Bish.

The drawing of the lottery had only just commenced ; all the large prizes, including three twenty thousands, still remained in the wheel ; and he should think himself an amazingly awkward fellow if he could not contrive to waylay one at least of these on its passage out. So with his sixty-odd pounds he purchased two whole tickets, and nine-sixteenths of different numbers—pocketing, besides, eighteenpence, the surplus of his prize-money ! Human ingenuity had herein done its utmost : the rest remained with a higher power. But, with all our respect for the petticoat, the truth must be told—Fortune behaved to him exceedingly unlike a lady, for she allowed all his eleven chances to turn up blanks !* Upon the whole, then, he considered the lottery to be *uncertain*, to say the best of it.

What then should he do ? His landlord was a 'cute, clever fellow, who had often ventured hints and insinuations to him of the great interest he could afford to give for the money, if he knew where to raise about *eighteen hundred pounds* (which, by a strange coincidence, happened to be the very amount of Lickpenny's money in the Bank) to play with *in a certain way* : so he resolved to sound his landlord upon the subject.

This resolution was taken a few months subsequent to our last notice of the old gentleman, during the latter part of which period he had been altogether unable to quit the house, and seldom, indeed, could he leave his room. He had abundant opportunities for carrying his resolution into effect ; for receiving no visitors, he made it a point that Quiddy should remain at home to keep him company every evening, and devote to him, besides, the greater part of the Sunday—allowing him merely an hour or two to get his “mouthful of fresh air.” Few could have submitted to his domination, unless, indeed, the hint about

* An accident, in all respects similar to this, befel a *friend* of ours whom we are not at liberty to name.

“neither chick nor child” (repeated as often as occasion might require) contained a charm to compel obedience; but Quiddy, to his credit be it said, seldom remonstrated against it, kindly yielding to this and to all the tormenting whims and caprices of his poor invalid lodger, with all the assiduity of—an expectant. If, now and then, he wished him in a “better place,” surely there is no harm in desiring the improvement of any one’s situation.

In reply to the old man’s inquiries touching the means whereby Quiddy would be enabled to allow a capitalist more than the legal rate of interest for the use of his money, the latter imparted to him just so much of his proceedings as suited his own purpose, yet sufficient at the same time to inflame the old man’s cupidity.

“And do you really make as much as seven *per cent.* by—by usury?” exclaimed Lickpenny, uttering the last word with delicate hesitation.”

“I do, upon my honour, Daddy,” replied Quiddy, seemingly displeased at the implied doubt—for he might safely have pledged his honour, and his conscience too, to double and treble that amount of gain by such practice. “No, no,” continued he; “trade is all very well in its way; but it isn’t by selling modicums of snuff and tobacco that money is to be made in a hurry, that I can tell you.”

“But, my boy—but—but—do—do you—?”

“Speak out, Daddy,” said Quiddy, perceiving the other’s hesitation; “speak out. You know I somehow look upon you as a father, as I’ve often told you; so you have a right, like, to say what you please to me.”

“Well, then; do you think that kind of traffic—lending money, in short, at usury—quite—quite honest?”

“Honest!” exclaimed Quiddy.—And then, with a pretended look of profound meditation, he continued: —“Let me see: take five from seven and there remains

two. Now, the honesty of it is in that 'ere additional two *per cent.*, Daddy ; and if a certain person not far from Threadneedle-street hadn't been in the habit of calculating in the same way, he wouldn't have been where he was the year before last. No, no ; Lord Mayors an't to be made out of petty cheesemongers in a straightforward regular way, as easily as you'd make—make—"

Not being of a figurative turn of mind, he could not readily hit upon a simile ; and the one which did at last occur to him—"as easily as you'd make real Havannah cigars out of dock-leaf"—it did not suit his purpose to utter. So, finding himself obliged to do like his betters when they find they cannot get what they want, even though it be something of greater import than a simile—that is to say, obliged to do without it—he continued :

"Honest ! why, Lor ! I'm not the only one in this great town, by many a score, that does it. There's Tapeton and Co., the haberdashers ; and Veneer and Sons, the upholsterers ; and Glitters and Co., the silversmiths and jewellers. But *they* do things on a gigantic scale ! Yet *you* remember *their* beginnings, Daddy : one, standing with a tray of gilt-copper rings and brooches at the corner of one street, and the other with a dozen plated spoons at the corner of another street. *Now*, Tapeton is a Director of the Extinguisher Fire Office—and what's more, Churchwarden ; Veneer, a Common-councilman ; while Glitters is an Alderman, and his partner a M.P. ; so *in* course, it's honest."

And all this, he might have added (as it was his wont to boast in his own case), is the result of "sheer industry."

"But suppose it should be discovered that you lend money at usury ?" said Lickpenny.

"I never do," replied the other.

And here he explained to Lickpenny the ingenious canister-system.

“Seven *per cent.*,” said the old man, musingly ; “and, you said, sometimes you could afford to give a *bonus*—but what that means I don’t rightly understand.”

“It means that, if I happen to turn the money to uncommon good account, I can afford a little share out of the profits besides the interest. Ah ! I missed a beautiful thing the other day, owing to my own little bit of money being all locked up in one way or another. If I had but known where to get six hundred pounds last Wednesday, for only three months, I could have given fifteen, ay, twenty pounds for it, besides interest, and done no harm to myself either.”

“Ah—how—tell me how?” said the old man, eagerly.

“Heark’ee, Daddy: Groutsley, the wine-merchant, was so hard pressed the other day for money to keep up his credit, that if I could have lent him nine hundred pounds for three months—”

“Stop, Mr. Q.,” said Lickpenny, who had been listening to Quiddy with the deepest attention ; “stop—just now you said six.”

Quiddy was a little confused by this interruption ; and the cause of his confusion requires explanation. He was inadvertently at the point of divulging the secret of the enormous profit which he should have derived from this transaction, had it been carried through ; and this it was not to his interest to do. The truth is, the distressed party wanted six hundred pounds ; as security for which he would have assigned to the lender wines and spirits warehoused in the docks (and really worth double that sum), and have rendered himself liable as for a loan of nine hundred pounds—the visionary three hundred passing in the form of the packet of canisters. This transaction, monstrous as it may seem, might be paralleled by hundreds of instances in the history of *usu*—we mean, of assisting the distressed.

Now, in the event of Quiddy's obtaining possession of his lodger's money "to play with," (and which he very well knew him to have at his disposal,) it was by no means his intention to allow him an equal participation in the profits arising from it, but merely just so much more than the income he actually derived from it as should satisfy him that it was well and advantageously placed in Quiddy's keeping. Hence the confusion of the latter when he perceived that he was saying too much. Quickly recovering himself, however, he said—

"You don't understand me, my dear old Daddy ; it's this, don't you see : I give him six in cash, one in canisters, and he makes himself liable for seven. There's one hundred clear profit, and good security besides. Well, it's no use lamenting ; but as I couldn't help him, he went to Glitters's, the silversmiths, and there he got the stuff in a twinkling. Wine or washballs, pearls or pantiles, it's all fish that comes to their net, so long as they can get enough of the article for their security."

"Pity you lost it," said Lickpenny, thoughtfully.

"Well," said Quiddy, "there's no use in tantalizing you by telling you of these good chances, seeing as how you have sunk all your money in an annuity."

"Now, suppose," said the other, cautiously, "I only say *suppose* I could muster up a hundred pounds or so, or even two hundred, could you make a good thing of it for me ?"

"Twice as much as you make of it now," replied Quiddy ; "but what matters supposing ? it's only making your mouth water to no purpose, Daddy, so don't let us talk any more about it."

"But, on the other hand, the risk," said Lickpenny ; "the risk in this sort of traffic !"

"I have never lost one single farthing by it yet," replied Quiddy, exultingly ; "and as I manage matters, there's no chance that I ever shall. Haven't I always

security in hand—in hand, eh? No, no, Daddy; let me alone for that: I'm a 'cute un, that I can tell you."

Lickpenny considered a while, and then said—

"Mr. Q., I'll be candid with you. The little property I have is all at my own disposal: who told you the contrary, or for what purpose, I can't guess; nor, indeed, does it much matter. No—I can command every penny of it at an hour's notice. Now, the next time a snug thing offers, I should like a share of it; but mind this—I'll not run the least risk. If I advance my money, you must bear me harmless."

This, Mr. Q., well knowing that he might with safety, undertook to do; and an opportunity of gratifying the old man's singular desire to share in a snug thing, or, in other words, to make a large profit without risk, was not long in presenting itself. It is needless to state the particulars of the transaction: suffice it to say, that a distressed tradesman had instant occasion for a hundred and fifty pounds, for only ten days, for the use of which he proposed to Mr. Quiddy to pay him legal interest, and also to purchase of him his packet of tin-canisters for *twenty* pounds. It happened that the benevolent lender had already placed out, to similar charitable purposes, all his own funds, so he was constrained to apply to his tenant. An offer of seven *per cent.*, and a *bonus* of *three* pounds for the use of that sum, with Quiddy's own security for the repayment of it at the end of the stipulated ten days, was sufficient temptation to Lickpenny, who, ill as he was, hurried off to the Bank to procure the money. Upon his return, the transaction was, through the medium of Quiddy, completed; and if the latter took the lion's share of the profits of it, it surely was no more than he was, or, at least, thought he was, entitled to—a way of thinking which is not unfrequently made to serve as a substitute both for right and reason.

At the expiration of the ten days, Lickpenny found himself repossessed of his money; and, so delighted

was he with the success of this his first adventure, that he expressed himself eager to repeat it. Again, and frequently, was this wish gratified ; but still, like the ogre in the fairy tale, his cry was "more, more, more !"

Having, however, what he had a notion was a *conscience*, he never would inquire into the nature of each particular transaction by which he was so great a gainer, nor would he ever see the party interested in it : his dealings were with Quiddy himself.

"Mr. Q.," would he say, "*you* want so much money ; I don't inquire for what purpose ; I lend it to *you* ; give me your acknowledgment for the *exact sum* ; if, presently, I find anything over and above it in my table-drawer, I shall take it, no matter how it may come there—you understand."

Satisfied that Quiddy was both a clever fellow, and (in the City sense of the term) a "good man," and his eagerness for gain increasing in proportion to the facility with which it was acquired, Lickpenny had, by degrees, embarked nearly the whole of his property in this profitable trade ; till, one day, tempted by an opportunity of receiving an extraordinary large return for his capital, he was induced to advance, in a single adventure, fourteen hundred pounds. This was for the use of a tradesman who, having just received *upon credit* from various manufacturers, silks, velvets, lace, and other similar commodities, to the full value of three thousand pounds, was suddenly seized with so ardent a desire to visit America—for the purpose, probably, of judging for himself of that unparalleled country, and its incomparable people, concerning whom some European visitor may, once in a way, have spoken somewhat irreverently)—that, with noble indifference to pecuniary advantage, he resolved to gratify his laudable intention, even at the sacrifice of more than one-half of the value of the property in question. But as this was not the only disinterested act of the kind

which he had lately performed, and delay being *inconvenient* to him, he made it an imperative condition of the bargain that it should be concluded, and the money paid to him, early on the following day.

Lickpenny having consented to advance to Quiddy the requisite funds, to that condition the latter agreed.

The next morning, as these two friends to the distressed were seated at opposite sides of a small table, the elder employed in counting out bank-notes, and the other in writing his note-of-hand as security to him for the amount, Quiddy was suddenly startled by a long and deep groan. He looked up, and, to his amazement and horror, perceived that the old man had fallen back in his chair, pale and speechless, with his eyes open, but rigidly fixed. He ran to his assistance, and spoke to him, but in vain : he was insensible, and, to all appearance, dead.

Quiddy, greatly alarmed, desired his assistant in the shop to go with all speed for the doctor nearest in the neighbourhood. He next hastily collected together the notes which were lying on the table (not deeming it prudent that they should be there displayed), and thrust them into Lickpenny's old leathern pocket-book, which was lying open before him. In his left hand the old man held a small packet of notes, but so firmly were the fingers clenched, that Quiddy had some difficulty in extricating them from his grasp. He succeeded, however, but not without an involuntary shudder as he was engaged in the unpleasant, but (as he considered it) necessary task—"For, what would the doctor think," thought he, "if he should see all this money lying about?" These notes he placed along with the others ; and (for security's sake) deposited the whole in his own coat-pocket. The unfinished document, upon which he himself had been employed, he threw into his writing-desk ; and, at the same moment, the doctor, Mr. Mortars, made his appearance.

The tale is soon told. Lickpenny having been placed

upon his bed (for it was in his bedroom that this scene occurred), the doctor looked at him, and gloomily shook his head; the doctor then felt his pulse, and shook his head more gloomily still; the doctor then ineffectually opened a vein, and shook his head so *very* gloomily, that it needed not his saying the old man was dead; or, to repeat the phrase he used (which, how much soever more pretty and genteel it may be considered, is certainly not more expressive)—the vital spark was extinct.

Now, when a doctor declares a patient to be dead, the declaration may be taken as incontrovertible; for, since it pronounces the cessation of fees, it is never delivered but upon sure ground. In the present abrupt case, the one single attendance-fee which the doctor (as the apothecary styled himself) would have to receive would be the “end all and the be all:” he could get nothing more by the deceased: so, again gloomily shaking his head, with a deep-drawn sigh he said, “It was a very sad affair”—meaning, most likely, the sudden death of Lickpenny.

CHAPTER XVI.

Results of the awful Catastrophe—Too Cautious by half—A case of Conscience—Rational Curiosity—A Coroner’s Inquest, together with a passing Reflection concerning that useful Institution—“Sheer Industry” again prospers—A short Essay on Grundyism.

QUIDDY could not but be shocked at this awful event; and when informed that the old man was indubitably dead, he burst into tears. Confused and bewildered by the suddenness of the stroke, for a time he walked about the room wringing his hands. When he had in some degree recovered himself, he stopped, and turned

to the doctor ; and, striking his forehead, imploringly cried—

“What *am* I to do, doctor—what *am* I to do?”

“You had better send to his relations, and inform them of what has happened,” replied Mortars.

“He an’t got none,” said Quiddy.

“Then send to one or other of his most intimate friends,” continued Mortars.

“He an’t got one—at least that I know of,” replied Quiddy, “for nobody ever came to see him for the two years he has lodged with me.”

“Strange!” exclaimed the other. Then, after a moment’s reflection, he inquired, “Who was his usual medical adviser?—Who was his attorney?”

“Ah! true,” said Quiddy, greatly relieved by the suggestion; “Mr. Leechman, of Bishopsgate-street, was his doctor, but I never heard of his having an attorney.”

“Then you had better send instantly to Mr. Leechman,” said Mortars, at the same time looking at his watch; “I don’t see that *I* can be of any use here; besides, I have business of my own to attend to.”

“Do you think there will be a coroner’s inquest?” inquired Quiddy.

“Unquestionably,” replied Mortars. Then, as if suddenly struck by the thought, he said—

“By the bye, you say he has neither friends nor relations: who is there to look after his property? I suppose he *has* property?”

“Property?—oh—the *furniture* is all mine,” replied Quiddy, innocently looking around the room.

“But he must have property of some sort?” said Mortars.

“Oh—yes—in course—those boxes and trunks are all his’n; and his clothes, and so forth, are in those drawers; and that’s his watch on the table; and a few books in the next room, and the prints hanging about are all his’n. And, oh”—and his heart palpitated as he said it—“and, then, there’s that iron box with

the bunch of keys in it, under the bed—that's his'n also."

"Are you at all related to him, Mr. Quiddy?"

"Not in the least, doctor."

"Um," said Mortars, gravely stroking his chin; "I'm no lawyer, but I don't think there can be any harm in our doing what I am about to suggest, nor do I apprehend that you will so misunderstand a well-meant suggestion as to take offence at it. Now, as the unfortunate old man, dying in your house, a stranger, has nobody about him legally authorized to look to the security of his property; and as I am the first person called in, and but a few minutes after the melancholy occurrence, I think—I do really think it would tend greatly to *your* satisfaction if I were to affix my seal to the various things belonging to him. I can't wait the arrival of Mr. Leechman, which may be a good while delayed; so that, under all circumstances—"

"I'm sure, doctor," said Quiddy, eagerly interrupting him, "so far from being offended, I shall be very much obliged to you if you will take that trouble. It will be a great weight off my mind, for there's no knowing *what* some people are capable of saying."

What he could apprehend that people were likely to say, since he did not explain, we shall spare ourselves the trouble of conjecturing. Mortars did not, in the least, notice the observation, but asking for sealing-wax and a light, and having received them, he proceeded to affix his seal to all the boxes and drawers (which were locked), and, lastly, came to the iron box which we have already noticed. The lid was down, and the key (to which was attached the bunch) was in the keyhole. The doctor turned the key, and having put his seal to that box also, delivered the bunch to Quiddy. The latter suggesting that as that was the poor old man's iron chest, it might "be better to put *two* seals to *that*," the other replied that one seal, where he had placed it,

was as good as a hundred ; and intimating that he should be ready to attend whenever his presence might be required, he wished Quiddy good morning, and departed.

Had Quiddy, before he offered the suggestion just noticed, reflected but for a moment, it would surely have occurred to him that so frail a thing as a seal is not placed on any depository for the purpose of protecting it against deliberate violence (to which end it would be impotent), but to stand as evidence whether such depository has, or has not, been opened, or tampered with, by any means whatever. For this, then, one seal properly placed was, as Mr. Mortars truly observed, as good as a hundred ; and it was as impossible, therefore, for anybody, without detection, to take anything *out* of the iron box, *as to put anything into it*.

Quiddy, left to himself, while waiting the arrival of Doctor Leechman, set about considering how he had best proceed in so far as the melancholy occurrence affected the person who was always foremost in his thoughts—namely, Mr. Quiddy. The chief subject of his cogitation was (we need hardly say) the pocket-book. With respect to that, he was placed in a very awkward predicament. When pointing out to Mr. Mortars the various articles which constituted the whole, as he said, of Lickpenny's property, it had suddenly slipped his memory that he had in his own coat-pocket a not unimportant portion of it. Should he suddenly recollect himself, and confess his oversight? That would have a very odd appearance ; for how could he reasonably account for his forgetfulness of an item of such magnitude ! Then again, it would certainly be inquired how it had come into his possession, and for what purpose ; and these obvious questions he could not truly answer without divulging secrets, the exposure of which might be injurious to himself ; and for Mr. Quiddy to be the means of injuring Mr. Quiddy was a

circumstance at the bare idea of which humanity must shudder. Nobody, indeed, had a right to expect *that* of him. Upon the whole, then, it would not be proper to recollect suddenly that he was in possession of the object under consideration.

What, then, should he do with it? Unluckily, thought he, the iron box (as well as everything else) being sealed, he could not put it into that without being *found out*; and instead of believing that he had broken it open for the purpose of restitution, people would be more inclined to suspect the very opposite intention. No—that must not be thought of.

Should he conceal it in or about the bed, or behind a chest of drawers, and so let it be discovered as if by accident? That would be unsafe: it *might* be found by somebody or other who *might happen* to go into the room, and that somebody or other might be tempted to purloin it. So *that* would not do.

A new train of thought entered his mind. Had the old man left a will behind him? If he had, why, as he, Quiddy, had always treated him with abundance of kindness and attention, and as those commodities had been moreover of a quality the most disinterested, there could be no doubt that he was constituted sole heir to the property—in which case it would be his by right; if he were *not* so constituted, he should properly consider himself to be a very ill-used person, and as justified, upon every principle of equity, in repairing the ungrateful omission, by the means which accident had conferred upon him. In either case, then, the property was, *or ought to be*, his.

But the latter hypothesis was improbable, for there was no one in the world but himself to whom it was likely Lickpenny would bequeath his property—except, perhaps, he should have destined it to the enrichment of some already overgrown charitable fund, and “that would be a thousand pities.”

On the other hand:—Had he died intestate? In

that case, he, having been smuggled into the world without payment of the usual fees to the church for his right of *entrée*—being, in the eye of the law, *filius nullius*, or, as Quiddy expressed it, “he not belonging to nobody, and nobody not belonging to him,” all his beautiful, nice little bank-notes, together with everything else he died possessed of, would devolve to the Crown : and the mere notion of such a lapse was quite preposterous, the Crown being very well able to do without it. All things considered, then, and no one being in the secret but himself, he resolved that it would be not only prudent, but right (*towards himself*) to remain silent upon the matter till a question should be raised concerning it by anybody else, when it would be quite time enough for him to speak.

To a similar whim to affect the taciturn (a singular whim for a Frenchman to indulge in), an opulent banker, at the outbreak of the first French Revolution, was said to have been indebted for the greater portion of his immense wealth. At that period of horror and anarchy, great numbers of the French nobility (the marked victims of the time) secretly confided to his charge their jewels, cash, and plate, to be reclaimed upon the hoped-for return of tranquillity. Of these, many fell fighting in the royalist ranks, and many more by the hand of the executioner. When once the bullet and the guillotine have commanded silence, they are inflexible in their decree ; and as their victims could never remind Mons. P——d of their deposits (become by their removal the property of their surviving kindred), Mons. P——d saw no reason why he should be more communicative upon the subject than they.

Quiddy, by a majority as large as, not very long ago, was considered sufficient to influence the interests of a mighty empire—namely, a majority of ONE—having carried the question in debate in his own favour, he found no difficulty in persuading himself that this ONE was the voice (not of the people, but) of justice.

Having satisfied his mind upon this point, he proceeded to examine the contents of the pocket-book. There were (in addition to the bank-notes which he had lately thrust into it) a few memorandums of no importance ; and some notes-of-hand, payable to Lick-penny, for certain sums amounting together to nearly five hundred pounds, which he had at various times advanced to Quiddy for the purposes before mentioned.

"*My own* notes-of-hand, I declare !" exclaimed the latter : and so, indeed, in *one* sense, they were.

That the phrase was susceptible of another and very different construction, tells nothing against one who made no pretensions to a critical understanding of the niceties of the English language. Now, as every man has a right to do what he will with his *own*, it pleased Quiddy, in the exercise of this right, to tear those bits of paper, small as they were, into a quantity of bits considerably smaller. This operation, by an almost unavoidable association of ideas, reminded him of a document of a similar character which he had placed *unfinished* in his desk. *Being* unfinished, it was a mere scrap of paper of no value ; and to complete it, under existing circumstances, would, as he piously reflected, be a mockery of the dead.

"Draw up a note-of-hand payable to a dead man ! it would be downright stuff and nonsense," thought he.

Whereupon, with even less hesitation than in the previous case, he operated in a like manner upon that.

Just as he had completed this task, he was informed that a person wished to speak with him. This person being shown into his room, proved to be the gentleman who was so anxious to improve his mind by making a trip to America.

Quiddy, with a mournful countenance, informed him of what had just occurred : and added that, with respect to the arrangement which he had hoped to complete that day, he was sorry to say that the *party* who had promised him the necessary funds, had "called" in the

course of the morning, and disappointed him by the information that, owing to various causes, it was altogether out of his power to fulfil his promise.

There was no more to be said about the matter ; so the disappointed traveller went away, with a countenance to the full as rueful as Quiddy's. As, however, for the credit of human nature, it is to be hoped that the latter was not the only charitably-disposed person in London, let us console ourselves with the belief that the other found a friend elsewhere.

We have already said that Lickpenny never appeared personally in those transactions, but cautiously kept in the background : no one therefore of the parties "assisted" entertained the slightest suspicion that he was concerned in them. Now, it may be asked, why Quiddy, having in his hands the means intended for the particular purpose, did not complete a bargain which presented advantages so tempting ? We cannot say. It might be, that he thought it better not to dispossess himself of the notes, in case, by any accident, it should be discovered that they had been in his possession : a circumstance far from impossible, seeing that those fastidiously-precise people at the Bank take the trouble of dating and numbering their much-beloved issues—a practice which renders them traceable.

That our very loving friends and most peaceable neighbours the French, though endowed with every other fine quality under the sun, (and we have no less an authority for it than their own assurance)—that they are frivolous in their pursuits, "pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw," excited by trifles which a child of any other nation would despise, are facts so constantly asserted and so frequently proved, that it would be folly to dispute them. Not so the English. John Bull is a rational animal ; steady, sensible, wise, even in his amusements ; and (which is most to our point) of so well-regulated a curiosity, that little less

would excite it than would serve to stir the apathy of a Dutchman or a Turk. As for instance :

Samuel Ivory, comb and brushmaker, living in the narrowest part of St. Martin's-court, makes a journey to York ; at York, by an accident, he is killed ; at York he is buried. This shocking event is announced to the public by the newspapers, and, instantly, from all parts of London, crowds rush to St. Martin's-court ! There they are, jostled, jammed in, squeezed almost to suffocation, and screeching for help and mercy. At length they are pressed forward, till they reach the interesting object of their visit—the front of the closed house, *in which, mark you ! nothing at all had happened !* They stare at it for a good quarter of an hour ; read the inscription over the door, “Samuel Ivory, comb and brushmaker,” ten times over ; and having satisfied themselves that there he had lived, they exclaim, “Awful sight ! I shall never forget it !” and away they go to give place to others, equally eager with themselves to satisfy a rational curiosity. Should it so happen that Mr. Ivory had a manufactory surrounded by a high, dead brick-wall at Cripplegate, or elsewhere, so much the better ; there they go again, gape at the high dead brick-wall, cry, “Ah, that was his manufactory, poor fellow !” and return satisfied to their homes. So did it happen in the matter, from which (as it is not unfrequent with us) we have digressed.

Quiddy's shop-windows being partially, and the upper windows of his house entirely closed, the report that a sudden death had occurred therein, rapidly spread. The usual consequences ensued. From the moment when the event had become generally known, until midnight, crowds of people collected in front of the house, in order to gratify a curiosity honourable alike to their hearts and understandings, by staring up at the closed shutters—there being nothing *but* the closed shutters to be seen ! Satiated by long gazing on this “interesting spectacle,” and impelled by a curiosity

more rational still, with eager steps they proceeded thence to a street nearly a quarter of a mile away, to stare at the house in which *four years ago* (!) the deceased had carried on his business of a shoemaker, but which ever since that period had been occupied by a greengrocer ! The next day, and the next, were those exciting objects visited by other crowds (the largest numbers assembling on the Sunday), nor did the public curiosity entirely subside until the funeral was over.

Whoso shall assert that the English are not the most rational people upon the face of the earth, to him we say—"a fico for thee !"

By and by came Dr. Leechman. With an air of profound thought he pressed the wrist of his customer-defunct with those particular fingers usually employed to determine for life or death ; and whilst thus employed inquired what Mr. Mortars had done for him ? Being answered by Quiddy that Mortars could do nothing at all, Leechman, with that generosity for which he was remarkable, bore testimony to the prodigious ability of his professional brother, by declaring that human skill could have done no more, and confirmed the opinion of the former by pronouncing Lickpenny to be as dead as Julius Cæsar. He approved of the affixing of the seals to Lickpenny's effects, and agreed with Mortars that the present was a case for a coroner's inquest. Their joint opinions were speedily confirmed. Amongst the most useful of the institutions of this country a coroner's inquest stands pre-eminent ; at the same time, in *certain cases* of which it has cognisance, it is, of all its institutions, *the nastiest*. The cases chiefly alluded to are those in which self-destruction is either suspected or directly charged. Seldom is it that gentlemen, or men of respectability, who would conduct the inquiry as well with delicacy as with decency, are found willing to attend these disagreeable tribunals : the consequence is, the jury is mostly formed of the greengrocers, gingerbread-bakers, and chandlers

of the neighbourhood where its functions are required,—the low, the illiterate, and the ignorant. These find an unwholesome gratification in a disgusting pruriency of inquiry into all the matters connected with the deceased, whether tending to the elucidation of the one fact for their consideration or not : and from this very circumstance, perhaps, does that institution derive a portion of its utility. For, apart from the awful responsibility awaiting the dreadful crime of self-slaughter, we do solemnly believe that many a one of a mind sensitive and refined, when by misery, or grief, or suffering all but unendurable, he has been driven to the contemplation of the act as his sole apparent relief—we do solemnly believe that he has paused in its perpetration, startled by the dread of that coarse and heartless inquisition into his thoughts, his feelings and affections, his habits, his manners, and his circumstances, to glut by their exposure the vulgar curiosity of the town. But this is a subject too grave to be longer dwelt upon in pages of a character like these.

Well; according to the usual, but somewhat equivocal phrase, a jury “sat upon the body :”—a phrase, which being thus translated by a Frenchman who was reading to his countryman a newspaper report of a proceeding of this nature, “*Un jury s’est assis sur le cadavre*,”—the other, with a look of horror, exclaimed—“*Ah ! quels barbares que ces Anglais ! S’asseoir sur un cadavre ! l’idée seule me fait frémir !*”

The only witnesses examined were Quiddy, his shop-boy, and his maid-servant, Mr. Mortars, and Dr. Leechman. The case was as plain as a pike-staff ; and had it been investigated by a set of intelligent, educated men, would have been settled in an hour, and the verdict of “Died by the visitation of God,” returned at once ; but which, after a sitting of eleven hours, and an adjournment to ten o’clock on the following morning, was not delivered till five of that afternoon.

Each one of the jurors had, in his wisdom, many questions to ask, of which he had neither the sense to understand the import, nor sagacity to foresee the consequences ; so that had this been a case which required a cautious and an acute course of eliciting evidence—supposing it suspected that wilful murder had been committed by some person or persons unknown—the questions asked by these wiseacres were so nicely contrived to defeat the ends of justice, that (as we believe it has but too often occurred) by their aid the perpetrators would have been materially assisted in escaping detection.

We will not give a report in full of the proceedings before the coroner : the curious in such matters may seek for them in the newspapers of the time : the results of that investigation, and of others connected with the death of Lickpenny, so far as they concerned Quiddy (and it is only in so far that they concern us), will be all-sufficient for our purpose.

Quiddy having deposed *very clearly* to all he knew touching the melancholy event : it having been sworn to by the shop-boy that, within five minutes of the time when he had been sent by his master to fetch Mortars, he had seen the deceased alive and well : by Mortars that, upon his reaching the house within five minutes after receiving the summons, he found him dead : by Dr. Leechman that, upon his arrival some considerable time afterwards he found him in precisely the same state : and each having answered to a considerable mass of questions, all more or less unintelligible and irrelevant, which were put by the several jurors—one, because he thought the question “couldn’t do no harm if it didn’t do no good ;” another, because “he mought ax any question he’d a mind to ;” a third, because he thought it “a question which he would dare the crowner to object to at his apparel ;”—having answered variously to these, that they “didn’t know,” “couldn’t say,” “quite impossible to tell,” and

the like ; and there being no reason for supposing the deceased had met his end by unfair means, the verdict, such as it has been already stated, was found.

Respecting Lickpenny's property, when that became the subject of investigation, Mortars avouched that upon his examining his effects in the presence of the Doctor and Quiddy, the seals which he had placed upon them before he quitted the house on the morning of his first visit, he found perfect and entire : nothing, therefore, could possibly have been abstracted. A diligent search was made for a will, but no such document was to be found : this circumstance, however, was the less to be deplored, as they discovered neither property (so to speak—for the little that was afterwards found was hardly worth mentioning)—nor vouchers for property. It was shown that he had had money in the funds, which he had gradually sold out. What he had done with it nobody could tell ; and all that Quiddy could say upon the subject was, that the old man was always very close, and never spoke to anybody (at least not to him) about his concerns. There was but one solution of the mystery. In his strong box were found a quantity of old lottery-tickets, all crossed with the fatal word *blank*, in large black characters. "The foolish old fellow, then, must have made ducks and drakes of his money."

In a corner of the box, quite at the bottom, and beneath an old account-book, was discovered an old waistcoat tightly folded, within which was an old stocking, and within that again a little old canvas bag : this bag contained exactly thirty golden guineas. It has already been stated that owing to Lickpenny's isolated position in society, his property, should he die intestate, would devolve to the Crown. Besides these thirty guineas, which would barely pay the funeral expenses, and one or two trifling bills which remained unsettled, there was nothing remaining but his wardrobe.

Now, as George the Third was a gentleman (and it

was in the reign of that good king that these events occurred), and Lickpenny's clothes and linen being in not the best condition, it was deemed that the presentation of them to His Majesty might be taken as an insult; and the additional consideration that His Majesty being a much larger man than the defunct, not an article of said wardrobe but would be a very awkward fit, it was resolved that the Crown should be kept in ignorance of the matter, and the whole stock remain with Quiddy. The latter could not but say he thought he had the best right to it; and that, upon the whole, indeed, he considered himself a rather ill-used person, inasmuch as his late lodger had always led him to expect that, in return for the care and attention which he had bestowed upon him, he, Quiddy, would be well remembered at his death.

And thus did this affair end. To be sure, people did, for a time, talk, and wonder, and surmise, and shake their heads with a meaning; but people will talk, and wonder, and surmise, and shake their heads "let Hercules himself do what he may." So, instead of being displeased because they treated him as they would have treated Hercules, Quiddy ought to have been grateful for the compliment.

With respect to what he himself thought of his proceeding, although he did, at first, doubt the strict propriety of it, he soon argued himself into the belief that what he had done he had been perfectly justified in doing.

When a man retains *himself* to plead his cause in the court of his own conscience (as is commonly the case in affairs of this kind), he may rely upon the zeal and ability of his advocate for obtaining a verdict in his favour. It were needless to recapitulate the arguments he advanced, now that the property was securely his own, they being, for the most part, the same as were used upon a former occasion when he *forgot to mention* that he had it in his keeping; but the one the most satisfactory was, that without doing the smallest harm

to anybody else, he had done considerable good to Mr. Phineas Quiddy.

“What will Mrs. Grundy say!” exclaims the sensitive Dame Ashfield in the play. Many people take the entire world to be one huge Mrs. Grundy, and, upon every act and circumstance of their lives, please, or torment themselves, according to the nature of it, by thinking of what that huge Mrs. Grundy, the World, will say about it. Now they may rest assured that in ninety-nine cases in a hundred, that good lady is *otherwise* (we will not wound their self-love by suggesting that she is, possibly, *better*) employed, than in thinking either of them or their affairs; so that there is just so much valuable anxiety thrown away to no purpose. Would they but reflect upon this, how many a gratuitous heartburning might be spared them.

This short essay on Grundyism, though perhaps not strictly needful, has, nevertheless, three good excuses for appearing where it does:—first, That it was suggested to us by something just preceding it;—second, and better, That it is short;—last, and best of all, Because the world is likely to be as little improved by it as by many an essay forty times as long.

Now, since all the most important events that ever have occurred have been but so many nine days’ wonders, it will not appear surprising that after the lapse of a few months, the World, meaning thereby Cow-lane, Shoreditch, and its immediate neighbourhood, thought no more about Mr. Lickpenny, or his death, or the “*very* strange” circumstances connected with it, than if he had never been born. We do not mean to imply by any of these remarks, that the mind of Quiddy was of so sensitive a nature as to suffer much uneasiness from anything that might merely be *said* about him: his only care was to guard against being “found out;” and as he now felt secure against such an accident, he resolved upon carrying into execution a project

which, from the moment of his *succeeding* to the property of his lodger, he had secretly entertained, but which would have provoked observation and remark, dangerous, perhaps, had he done so at the time. This was nothing less than the removal to a larger house in a better neighbourhood; where, abandoning the snuff and tobacco trade, the profits upon which compared with those accruing from his *general* dealings were slow and small, he might devote his industry altogether to the latter. And this project, thanks again to "sheer industry," was he now well enabled to accomplish.

"Heyday! Mr. Alderman, you seem to be all in a bustle!" said a friend upon meeting one day, the late foolish and worthy Alderman —.

"Why, sir, I'm very busy 'untin' an 'ouse," replied the Alderman.

"Hunting a *nous*, are you? Then I heartily wish you may catch what you stand so much in need of," said the friend.

"Thank'ee, thank'ee," replied the innocent magistrate.

About the time when Quiddy was employed in "untin' an 'ouse—" But what is now to be related we deem worthy of a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER XVII.

A Haunted House—"There needs no Ghost:" Shakspeare—An Arrival.

ABOUT the time when our hero was employed in the manner noticed at the conclusion of the last chapter, Mcsquills received from Sweene an alarming account of the state of poor Janet. She had all along borne her sufferings, not with patience only, but with cheerfulness. Though the removal from her bed to her sofa

in the morning, and back to her bed at night, was always effected with difficulty, and generally with pain to her, yet never did an angry or a peevish expression escape from her lips.

For several weeks past she had been unable to endure even this slight removal, and had constantly remained on the sofa, lying on her right side so as to prevent any pressure on her injured limb. At her elbow was a small table whereon lay the Bible which had belonged to Mrs. Sanderson—the spectacles, Janet, with mingled feelings of piety and affection, still retained in the very place where the old woman had left them—and it was in reading that throughout the day, and in conversing with the family, or listening with deep interest to Sweenie's stories (which were mostly of the marvellous) in the evening, that she passed her time.

In short (as Sweenie wrote to our doctor) it seemed now to be nothing but her beautiful temper that kept her alive. As for Janet herself, she felt that she could not live long, yet did she express no fear of dying. On the contrary, she thought it was merciful to her to be taken from the world before she should “do any more harm in it”—she, poor girl, who never, either in deed, word, or thought, had harmed created thing!—and all she seemed to regret was, that she should never again see the good doctor (for as such she always spoke of McSquills), who when she lost her benefactress had been as a father to her.

“But that is hopeless,” she would say: “I cannot expect that he should leave his business, and come all this way to see a poor girl like me.”

In this she was mistaken.

It is remarkable that throughout her illness the name of Quiddy she never once mentioned.

The doctor was deeply grieved at this account of Janet's condition, for he entertained a sincere regard for her. After some reflection, he resolved to go and

judge for himself of her case. We cannot with truth say that this motive alone would have induced him to undertake so long, and, for him, so expensive a journey ; but, co-operating as it did with another, he scarcely hesitated about the matter. He immediately wrote to Sweenie, that having some business to transact at Aberdeen he would take that opportunity of seeing Janet, and that a day after the arrival of his letter his visit might be expected.

It happened that in that city he possessed a house which, for several years past, had been a source of very considerable annoyance to him ; for, though an excellent house, he could neither let it upon any terms, however moderate, for which he might offer it, nor sell it, except by such a sacrifice of its value, as he deemed it imprudent to make. Sweenie himself, indeed, was amongst the number of those who had declined to inhabit it.

Many years ago, when about to take unto himself a wife, and in consequence, like the Alderman, he was busy "untin' an 'ouse," this was offered to him at a third of the rent which he was paying for his present very inferior residence ; but after one terrible visit to it, he declared, with horror depicted on his countenance, that no temptation on earth would ever induce him "to put his head into the accursed house again."

The circumstances which had occasioned this mysterious aversion he would sometimes be prevailed on, though never without reluctance, to relate ; and *his* narrative exactly corroborated the story told by some few others who had ventured as he had done. He will presently be prevailed on to relate them once again.

Janet, it will readily be believed, was delighted at the promised visit of Dr. McSquills.

"And how considerate of him !" said she ; "to lessen the weight of my obligation to him for his kindness and trouble, he pretends to have business here."

"He *has* business here, Janet, and I suspect what

it is," said Sweenie ; adding, after a pause, and in a grave and impressive tone—"That house, that *awful house*, belongs to him."

"Would to Heaven the house were burnt!" exclaimed his wife.

"It wont burn—fire wont burn it," said he, in the same impressive tone as before. "When, eleven years ago, two houses, one on one side of it, and one on the other, were both reduced to ashes by one and the same fire, that accursed house escaped uninjured.* *He* that prompted the fearful deed protects it."

And as he uttered the emphasized word, with his finger he significantly pointed downwards.

"What house—and what about it?" inquired Janet.

"Have you never observed it?" asked Sweenie. "That large house standing alone in Broad-street, and looking right down Queen-street."

"I have," replied Janet ; "and good reason have I to remember it ; for it was just in front of it that I met with my accident.

"There again !" said Sweenie ; "I said at the time to my wife, that there was a curse upon the very spot."

Janet continued :

"It is an old house, very dirty, with its lower shutters always closed, and the frames and glass of the upper windows broken. And now" (added she, after a moment's pause)—"and now, I recollect observing that two windows on the third floor were always closed also."

"That was the room—it was *there*," said Sweenie, in a hollow voice.

"There?—what?" exclaimed Janet, startled by the manner of the speaker.

"In that room the foul deed was committed—*murder*," answered Sweenie.

* A similar curious fact is recorded as having happened at the great fire at Ratcliffe, which occurred on the 13th of July, 1794.

Janet shuddered. After a few moments of silence, she inquired—

“And was the murderer discovered?”

“He, the only one that was suspected of the deed, was tried for it, but, upon the clearest evidence in his favour, acquitted. He shortly afterwards went from Aberdeen to London, where for a few years he lived in good repute, and died at last on a bed. Yet *he* was the murderer.”

“How was that discovered?” inquired Janet.

“It is known—I know it,” was the somewhat evasive reply.

“But how—how?” eagerly cried Janet.

Sweenie made no direct reply, but, as if from a feeling of repugnance to approach the point, said—

“Shortly after the murderer had quitted this place, he sent directions for the sale of that house (for it was his), and it was purchased by a relative of Dr. McSquills, to whom that relative, at his death, bequeathed it. But it is a profitless incumbrance—an awful possession—a curse hangs upon it.”

“Tell me—tell me,” cried Janet, who was powerfully excited.

Sweenie hesitated; and then, with an involuntary but momentary shudder, whilst his countenance betrayed that the utterance of the words cost him a disagreeable effort, he said, in a tone of solemnity—

“Janet—that house is HAUNTED.”

Janet was startled by the word, but presently she smiled and gently shook her head, as if with incredulity.

Mrs. Sweenie, who had noticed the gesture, said, in a manner so serious as to remove all doubt from Janet’s mind—

“Janet, my dear child, do not doubt what he tells you. It is true—fearfully true. It is too awful a subject to jest with. What he has said, *he knows to be true*, and Serjeant Wilkie, who was with him, is still alive to vouch for it.”

Then turning to her husband she said—

“And now, as you have told her so much, you may as well tell her all. You have excited her curiosity and I’m sure she will be restless unless you do.”

“No, not to-night,” said he, “it is too late. The dreadful tale is not long, but you know, Moggie” (addressing his wife), “I don’t like telling it late in the evening.”

“To-morrow, then,” said Janet.

“Perhaps,” said Sweeney.

“No—you must promise,” said Janet.

“Well,” said he, with some hesitation, “well—I promise.”

“That’s enough,” said Janet, “when you promise, I know you will keep your word.”

“Though he has often told what he has promised to relate to you,” said Mrs. Sweeney, when her husband had left the room, “he is always affected by the recollection of it, as you have seen but now. *And no wonder*, Janet.”

On the following evening, Sweeney and his wife having taken their seats, as they had latterly been in the habit of doing, by the fireside in Janet’s room, for the purpose of keeping her company (she being unable to come down to them), Janet reminded Sweeney of his promise.

By a variety of excuses he endeavoured to evade it ; and when, after all, urged by Janet’s earnest entreaties, he consented to fulfil it, it was with evident reluctance that he did so. And with slow and deliberate utterance, which added to the impressiveness of his narration, thus, at length, he began :—

“It is now, as nearly as can be, nineteen years ago, when—”

He suddenly stopped, and turning pale at the recollection, said to his wife—

“Moggie—Moggie—it is exactly nineteen years this blessed night? No—don’t let us talk of it *on the*

very night—we will let it be for to-morrow—or the next.”

“No,” said Mrs. Sweenie ; “this is not the night ; it was on the twenty-*first* of the month.”

“Well,” said he, “and is not this the twenty-first?”

“No, this is the twenty-second : it was yesterday.”

“You are right,” said he, (considering the point for a moment, and reassured by the correction), “you are right—it is past.”

Contrary to their economical habit, he placed a second candle upon the table, and having thrown upon the fire a large log, whose sparkling and crackling aided also to enliven the room, which, being wainscoted with a dark-coloured wood, was gloomy, though small, he resumed :—

“Well ;—I had lately set up in business for myself, and was soon to be married to Moggie. In the same house where I rented a shop, I occupied a bedroom. This, though well enough for a bachelor, was not exactly a lodging to bring a wife to ; so we resolved to take a house, and let out so much of it as we might not require for our own purposes. I had, for some time past, been looking about, but without finding anything to suit me, when—it was yesterday exactly nineteen years ago, and never shall I forget the day—I chanced to look in upon Jemmy Anderson, the clothier in the Green,* who afterwards went to settle in Glasgow. I was telling him of my want of success in my search, when just at that time, in came Robin Wilkie, a serjeant in the —th, which had been a good while quartered in the town, so that Wilkie, being a good fellow, had grown into friendly terms with many of the townsfolks—me amongst the rest. Between jest and earnest, Wilkie said,

“‘Why, there’s the haunted house ; it is a very good one, and you can get that cheap enough.’

“I was young and stout-hearted, and to say the

* A street in Aberdeen so called.

truth, believed but little of the story ; though, before those two windows had been closed up, by order of the Town-Council, scores, Janet, ay, scores who had had the courage to look up (but they never dared to look a second time) had seen at those windows—for it appeared nightly, as surely as the night came, and as the clock of St. Paul's Chapel struck two—the very hour, mind, at which I *know* the murder was committed—there appeared— But I will not anticipate—I will relate in due course what that appearance was, and once to tell it will be often enough.

“ Well ; I said to Wilkie that having no faith in the story, and, besides, standing in no fear of the dead—I said that if I could get the house a bargain, and it should be suitable in other respects, I would just as soon live in that as in another ; and prepared to go at once and inspect it. From this I was strongly dissuaded by Anderson, who was one of those that had *seen* ; but as, at any rate, there was nothing to apprehend by daylight, it being but just one o'clock, thither I resolved to go, and Wilkie went with me.

“ On our way we called upon old Dapple—Dapple was a nickname they gave him, because the little hair he had was of all manner of colours, but his real name was Rennie—who had the letting of the house, and he, taking the key with him, accompanied us.

“ We visited every room, leaving *that room* till the last. When we came to it, Rennie, who being naturally anxious to secure a tenant, had assured us that there was not the slightest foundation for the awful reports concerning it, nevertheless declined to enter, broad daylight as it was ; so Wilkie and I went in without him. It was a bed-room ; but, as I shall presently have fitter occasion for describing it, I shall now only say that the floor was bare, except that on one part, near the bed, there lay a piece of old carpet. Upon removing that, large stains of blood were distinctly visible.”

Here he was interrupted by Janet, who inquired—
“Who was the person murdered, and by what means?”

“Suffice it to say,” replied the narrator, “the victim was his own niece. She was young (scarcely eighteen) and was said to be beautiful: the temptation to the crime was a large property, between which and her destroyer she unhappily stood.”

“And by what means did he commit the deed?” asked Janet.

“Janet,” said Sweeney, “the fact that the atrocious deed *was* committed, is sufficient for you to know: for I doubt whether the revolting details of crimes of this nature are altogether fit to meet a woman’s ear. But to go on with my story.

“We mentioned to Rennie what we had discovered. He would have persuaded us that they were natural stains in the wood, but they were not so. He then said he would have those boards removed and replaced by new ones, if I would hire the house. He offered it at so very low a rent that I was at the point of closing the bargain, when Wilkie prevented me, saying—

“‘Don’t buy a pig in a poke, man,’—those were his words. ‘The house is well enough, but then the *material point*—and that can only be settled in the dead of night. Now, I tell you what, Andrew; I think that you with a good stout cudgel in your hand and Nowce at your side’—Nowce was the name of a large Newfoundland dog of mine, as courageous and as strong as a lion. Poor fellow!”

Here Sweeney shook his head and sighed.

“Well; ‘you with a good stout cudgel in your hand, and Nowce at your side, and I,’ Wilkie went on to say, ‘I, with a brace of pistols loaded with slugs in my belt, will be a match for the fiercest ghost in all Scotland; and for any *man* who may be trying his tricks upon us, we’ll spoil his sport for the future. Now, make it

worth my while, I'll get leave of my captain, and watch with you to-night.'

"I asked him what he meant, and he proposed that I should provide a good supper, a quart of whisky and pipes; 'and that,' said he, 'would fortify us to outface any visitor, no matter of what kind, that might break in upon us.'

"As I said before, I was at that time young, stout, and fearless; so I readily assented to his proposal—Rennie undertaking to furnish lights, together with a fire and plenty of wood to keep it blazing."

"Would that you had told me of your intention," said Mrs. Sweenie, looking up from the needlework upon which she was employed: "you never should have set foot across that threshold!"

"Would that I had!" said he; "but I mentioned it to nobody, nor did the sergeant—both suspecting, that if we made any confidants, some trick might be tried to alarm us. At ten o'clock, carrying with me a basket containing provision for a comfortable supper, and with Nowce trotting at my side, I called for Wilkie, as it had been arranged between us.

"Upon reaching the house, where we expected to find Rennie waiting for us, according to promise, we perceived it to be in total darkness; for although *those windows* were not fastened up on the outside, as they have ever since been, the inner shutters were closed. We knocked several times, and receiving no answer, proceeded to Rennie's. He was at home, and excused himself for not having been at the place to receive us, by saying that he had suddenly been taken ill. But, the truth was, he was afraid to go there at night; for, upon asking him whether we should find the room made comfortable for us, it came out that he had gone there just before dark along with two men, whom he had sent up (for, as before, he would not venture in the room himself), with wood to make a fire, and who had hurried away as

soon as they had done so. He told us we should find a kettle and a large jar of water, and everything we could wish for ; and, giving a lantern and the key to Wilkie, (for I had to carry the basket, which was rather heavy), he wished us good night ; and looking at us, with just such a look, as I have often thought since, as if he never expected again to see us alive, said to me, he had no doubt we should come to a settlement about the house to-morrow.

“ Having let ourselves in, our first care was to bolt and bar the street-door, so as to secure ourselves against any attack from without. We were going up-stairs, when we missed the dog ; so we had to unbar the door again. We found him outside, and with something between a whine and a growl, looking upwards at those windows. As he would not come in at my call, I was obliged to drag him in by the collar—in short, to drag him all the way up-stairs, step by step, he continuing to whine all the time. Wilkie followed with the basket and lantern, for Nowce would not have allowed anybody but me to do with him as I had done. When we came to that room—”

“ Then you forgot to fasten the street-door again !” said Janet, inquiringly.

“ No,” said Sweenie ; “ before proceeding up-stairs, we took good care to secure it as before.—Well ; the room-door was open, and dismal enough did that room look, for the two candles on the table had not been lit, and the fire was nearly out ; so the first thing we did was to light the candles, and throw on fresh logs ; and by help of an old pair of bellows which Rennie’s men had left there, we soon got up a blazing fire. After taking each of us a pull at the whisky, we looked about us. It was a large square room which, as well as everything in it, was in a dirty condition, for till that day, it had not been opened for many years. A large four-post bedstead stood in one corner ; the hangings, the mattresses, and everything else had

been removed—in short, there was nothing but the bare bedstead. The only furniture was a table, a few old-fashioned, high-backed, leathern chairs, and a large heavy chest of drawers which stood near the door and opposite to the windows. The room was wainscoted from the ceiling to the floor, like this we are in, only the panels were handsomely carved—at least so far as we could make out the pattern for the dust and dirt that had accumulated in it. The fireplace was high and wide and deep, and the mantelpiece was carved with heads and flowers. There were no curtains to the windows, and the shutters were closed. But what made the room look most dismal of all was the ceiling, which was almost as black as ink. We locked the room-door, and—

“But where was the dog?” inquired Janet; “did he remain outside?”

“I was just going to mention him,” said Sweenie.

“To my mind,” said his wife, “the business about that poor dog has always appeared the most mysterious part of the whole affair.”

Sweenie continued :

“We locked the room door, and shoved the heavy chest of drawers close up against it, so that no one could possibly come in that way. We then walked round the room, carefully feeling the panels, so as to satisfy ourselves there was no opening in the walls. All this time Nowce followed me about, keeping so close to me as absolutely to touch my leg, and whining all the time. Thinking there might be a trap in the flooring, we next tried that all over—all but where the old piece of carpet lay, and, somehow, neither of us had courage to move *that*. As we approached it, indeed, Nowce howled fearfully. Wilkie and I just looked at one another, but neither of us spoke. Wilkie then went to one of the windows, and opened the shutters; I followed, and the air that came upon us through the open panes was not unpleasant. The night was pitch dark; the chimes

of St. Paul's Chapel had just struck the quarter-past eleven, and as we looked down the long street which was opposite, there was something melancholy—to us, at least—in seeing the lights in the different windows extinguished, one after another, till none remained, except, here and there, one in the chamber of some solitary student. Fearful of attracting the attention of any passenger towards the house, we closed the window, and sat down to supper, fully resolved to make ourselves comfortable—Wilkie taking his seat at one side of the table (which we had drawn close to the fire) with his face *opposite* the bedstead—mind that, Janet—beside which lay *that piece of carpet* ; while I placed myself at the other, consequently with my back towards those objects. The dog lay down at my feet, but he was restless.

“‘It is clear there are no openings of any kind in the room except the door,’ said I, ‘and that we have secured.’

“‘I am afraid of no *man*,’ said Wilkie, drawing his pistols from his belt, and, after examining the primings, placing them upon the table and close to his elbow—‘I am afraid of no *man*—and for the rest—’ And as he spoke these last words, he smiled.

“We set to with a hearty good-will upon the provisions I had brought. I placed some meat before my dog, and it struck both Wilkie and myself as remarkable that, though he had not been fed since early in the day, he would not eat, but that he would drink as often as water was given to him. He had all along lain at my feet with his head towards the piece of carpet, and, as time advanced, his uneasiness increased, and every now and then he uttered a low moan.

“‘The clock struck one. I took the kettle from the hearth and mixed for myself a third glass of whisky-and-water, and desired Wilkie to do the same.

“‘Andrew,’ said he, ‘I’m an old soldier : this third glass will be just enough to keep us warm and com-

fortable ; but, after it, we must take no more. Though I expect no visit from a ghost, we *may* have work to do with something more substantial ; so let us keep our heads cool and our hands steady for the occasion. Any other time you'll find Robin Wilkie your man for treble the quantity.'

" We had been talking about Moggie, for the sergeant knew of our intended marriage, and that was the only subject I could talk about at that time, and the minutes passed rapidly on. The chimes struck the first quarter-past one—the second quarter—the third !! when, at the very first stroke of that bell, Nowce sprang, with one sudden and single bound, from my feet to that carpet, and dragging it from the fatal spot, gave a howl so long and so melancholy, that for the moment we were like transfixed by it. Soon recovering ourselves, we rushed, each with a pistol in hand, to where the dog stood, thinking that his quick ear had discovered some noise which had escaped our attention, and that some opening was *there*. We examined the boards with the greatest care, but they were all fixed and immovable. We replaced the carpet, for what was beneath it was not a pleasant sight to look upon, and returned to our seats *as before*. Nowce slowly followed me, and again placed himself at my feet. He trembled violently, as if shaken by an ague ; moaned, and, looking me piteously in the face, his head suddenly fell. Poor fellow ! There he lay—dead ?

" Neither Wilkie nor I spoke a word. Each sat, silently grasping his pistol, awaiting the next stroke of the clock. Every second *now* till the *appointed hour* appeared to us an age. My eyes were all this time bent downwards upon poor Nowce. The first chime sounded for two !

" Now, mark me ! It is not for me to speak of my own courage, but I may say that Wilkie was a brave man, for such had he shown himself in many a hard-

fought field. I have said that the first chime sounded for the hour of two !”

The voice of the narrator faltered as he proceeded :—

“ Wilkie, in a voice that sounded to me unlike his own, suddenly exclaimed, ‘ Andrew !—I looked up at his face—large drops of sweat rolled like rain from his brow—his eyes were glaring upon *that spot* :—I needn’t have turned to look ; the expression of his countenance would have been enough, plainly telling, as it did, how fearful was that which he was gazing upon. I slowly turned my head, and (O ye powers, let me forget it !) I there beheld—”

His voice was choked with emotion—he gasped for utterance. His wife, though she had often heard the dreadful tale, at this point of it threw down her work, and hid her face in her hands ; while Janet, intensely interested, with outstretched head, and eyes riveted to those of the speaker, listened with breathless attention.

The narrator, making a strong effort, at length proceeded—

“ I turned my head—towards—the fatal spot—and there BEHELD——”

He was suddenly interrupted by a loud knock at the street-door. In one minute the welcome voice of McSquills was heard in the passage below, and in another, the worthy doctor was in the room. We need scarcely say that, in her delight at the arrival of her friend, Janet forgot everything about the house and its awful history ; so we, like herself, remain in ignorance of the termination of the adventure.

The first salutations over, the anxious doctor proceeded at once to satisfy himself, as well by inspection as by inquiry, touching the true condition of Janet. After a few consolatory expressions to her, he desired to know when supper would be ready ; for, as we have seen upon a former occasion, he was not unmindful of

his creature-comforts. The meal soon made its appearance ; and McSquills, by his frequent attacks upon the good things which, with true Scottish hospitality, were plentifully spread before him, proved that his journey had done no injury to his appetite. Whisky-toddy, and chat upon various subjects with his entertainers, and with Janet concerning former times in London, carried them on to a later hour than was consistent with the habits of any one of the party ; and when, at length, they retired for the night, no allusion had been made to either one of two disagreeable subjects—Mr. QUIDDY, or THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Janet dies—Her various (Dis)qualifications for the Character of a Heroine enumerated—Doctor McSquills, P.P.C.—His parting Wishes to Quiddy.

THAT night Janet slept longer and better than she had done for a considerable time past, and in the morning awoke refreshed. It was well that it was so, for it enabled her to take part in a long, but necessary, conversation, in private, with the doctor, which it might otherwise have been beyond her strength to endure. When, at its termination, Mrs. Sweenie went into the room, she was startled at the expression of their countenances, each so different from the other's, that it was hard to conceive that the same topic had engaged the two parties ; for while Janet's exhibited cheerfulness almost amounting to joy, the doctor's was clouded with grief. The text would however have been sufficiently intelligible to the good woman, without the following little commentary from Janet, who, holding out her hand to her, said, with a smile so sweet as to

impart a kind of beauty to a face which we never have classed among the beautiful—

“Well, Mrs. Sweenie, I have but a few hours longer to be with you. God’s will be done! and may He bless you and yours for all your kindness to me.”

There was no expression of regret at relinquishing life thus early, for she felt none. That which lends to life its dearest charm, love, the life of life, had been suddenly and rudely extinguished in her bosom, and the flame was never to be revived. We may here repeat what we have said before, that in affairs of the heart there is no accounting for taste: but so it was.

The truth is, that McSquills, finding Janet’s case to be utterly hopeless, and drawing more rapidly to a termination than even the letter which induced his visit had led him to expect, thought it right to tell her so. This he did with great feeling and tenderness. She received the announcement with resignation equal to the composure with which, as we have seen, she presently afterwards communicated it to Mrs. Sweenie. There were but two circumstances, doubts about which oppressed her mind:—Might she direct the disposal of Mrs. Sanderson’s property (for she never really considered it as her own) as she thought she *ought* to do? and, if so, would her will be strictly fulfilled when she was no more. The doctor solemnly assured her that she might rest satisfied upon both points.

“Then I am *quite* happy now,” said she. “Raise my head a little, if you please, sir, and take the paper which you will find under the pillow.”

McSquills did as she desired, and drew from beneath her pillow a paper in the form of a letter, sealed, and addressed to himself.

“And what is this letter to me about, my dear child?” inquired he.

“It isn’t a letter,” replied she; “that’s my *will*, if you please, sir. I made it as soon after my accident

as I was able to write ; but, be sure you don't open it till it is all over with me."

As she proceeded at once to inform him of the principal contents of the document, this restriction must have been dictated by her natural good taste and delicacy : she had made a trifling bequest (accompanied with an earnest expression of kindness and gratitude) to himself.

Feeling at this moment no inclination to excite a smile at the expense of poor Janet's style and orthography, we shall suppress the "will"—(which was, in fact and in form, a *letter* addressed to McSquills, beginning with "Honerd Sir," and concluding with an assurance that she should for ever remain his dutiful and grateful servant)—merely observing that it was drawn up with an intrepid contempt of legal forms and technicalities, and in terms which would have perplexed the attorney's-office-drilled mind of Mr. Grubb, by their very clearness and simplicity.

"What !" exclaimed the astonished McSquills ; "leave it all to him ! I'm clean amazed !"

"All, sir," replied she ; "all except those few pounds to buy some trifling remembrances of me for my friends here, and their children, who have all been very kind to me ; and—and one other trifle to another friend. It has always been my intention to do so, if I found I might, and if I should die before him."

"What !" again exclaimed he ; "notwithstanding his treatment of you, my guid lassie ?"

At this allusion Janet closed her eyes, and for some minutes remained silent, while a slight tremulous motion was observable about her mouth. At length she spoke again.

"It is for that very reason, sir. But for *that*, he would have had the property, not I : I'm *sure* he would. I have always looked upon myself as having stood in the way of his good fortune, and have been

sorry for it—very ; but I did not do so purposely—I couldn't help it."

"And can it be possible!" said the doctor ; "can it be possible that you still—"

Ere he could utter the words "love him," he was interrupted by Janet, who, snatching his hand, said, with an upturned look, and in a tone of solemn earnestness—

"What I have done, I have done from a feeling of justice—strict justice ; nothing more—nothing more—nothing more, on the word of a dying girl. But say no more about it. I never spoke upon this subject to any living creature before, except Mrs. Sanderson—and even to her, little—seldom : I have now done with it, as I shall soon have done with everything else in this world—for ever."

Exhausted by the effort which this conversation had cost her, she soon fell into a light slumber. McSquills remained at her side, watching her as she slept, and, ever and anon, drawing the back of his huge hand across his eyes, and muttering, "Puir lassie !—puir lassie !"

From this time she became gradually more and more enfeebled ; but, happily, she was entirely free from pain. She was perfectly calm and would occasionally speak, though rarely but when spoken to. Sometimes she would say, in a scarcely audible tone, "How happy I feel !" while a faint and momentary smile would disturb (if it may be so said) the fixed serenity of her countenance. The good McSquills was seldom away from her, although his aid could now avail her nothing.

On the third day, towards noon, she grew restless and uneasy, for she had not slept during the whole of the preceding night. McSquills was in the room with her. Janet beckoned him towards her, and motioned to him to bend his ear to her lips, for she could not speak loud enough to make herself otherwise heard. He did so.

"Doctor," she said, in a scarcely audible whisper, "I think I could sleep if you would take my hand—and sit by me—and watch me while I sleep. I *wish* you would. But don't let go my hand."

He did as she desired. She was presently asleep, and slept peacefully for about an hour. Suddenly she opened her eyes, as if awaking from a dream of a by-gone event, and murmured, "It need not have been so, Phineas—but it is all your own fault."

In a moment she was asleep again; and thus did she remain for two hours more.

All this time McSquills continued to hold her hand in his; and although cramped and in pain from sitting so long in the same position, the good-natured doctor abstained from making the slightest change in it from the fear of disturbing her by so doing. At half-past three precisely she once more opened her eyes—then slowly closed them again, and turned her head a little upon her pillow—so little, indeed, as to be scarcely perceptible—and died.

It was some time ere McSquills relinquished his hold of her hand. At length he did so; rose; bent his head over the poor girl, and pressed his lips to her forehead, which was already icy cold.

Mrs. Sweeney having come at his summons, he silently pointed to the couch on which lay Janet; and without uttering a word, his head resting on his bosom, he slowly and mournfully quitted the room.

Rest thee, Janet Gray!

We have not pretended to present this poor girl as a heroine, in the old and hackneyed, yet (oddly enough at the same time) *Novel* sense of the term. She was unfitted by many circumstances to sustain so interesting a position. Her character was not an incongruous compound of incompatible qualities; she was not addicted to hysterics, even upon the *slightest* provocation; nor to fainting-fits; nor to torrents of tears, which, in their

Niagarian copiousness and impetuosity, threaten to exhaust, and leave for ever desiccated the very springs of grief. Again : she never knelt in prayer to implore forgiveness for a penitent "floricide," who had too late bethought her of the sin of ruthlessly wrenching a rose-bud from the parent stem ; she never wearied with apostrophes that beautiful and very patient sufferer, the silvery and resplendent orb of night ; nor was she subject to those afflicting eruptions of oratory by which (if applied to that purpose) a spinster Cicero might haply command the tears, if not the twopences, of the blackman-cipatresses of Clapham and Hackney. No—she was a simple, truthful, direct, kind-hearted, affectionate girl—nothing more ; and, for her person !—to deal gently with it, her portrait, though done by the best milliner-painter of the day, would certainly not be allowed a place in the forthcoming number of the "Monstrosities of Beauty." To complete her disqualifications, if more be wanting, she died, not of a broken heart, but from the consequences of a broken limb. But, such as thou wert—once more—Rest thee, Janet Gray !

McSquills's own immediate business in Aberdeen was the disposal of *the house*. Standing as it did in the way of some projected improvements, a much larger sum was offered to him for its removal than he could procure for it as a habitation. With this proposal he gladly closed, and the building (greatly to the comfort of the neighbours, and more particularly to the Sweenies, who made a vow never again to speak of it, or of the awful circumstances connected with it) was doomed to instant demolition. With the product of the sale in his pocket, the doctor looked upon himself as a rich man ; and having followed poor Janet to her grave, he returned to London, resolving to relinquish his profession, and pass the rest of his life in ease and comfort.

We left Mr. Quiddy busied in the search of a house : we find him, at the time of the doctor's return to London, preparing to remove into one suitable to his purpose, in Mark-lane, Fenchurch-street. The situation was neither pretty nor pleasant : it would not have attracted the attention of a Capability Brown, a Nash, or a Decimus Burton ; but as Quiddy contemplated it with an eye directed rather to the main chance than the picturesque, we must not quarrel with him for his choice. It was spacious ; its rooms were well adapted both for the stowage and display of the heterogeneous commodities which were constantly coming into his possession (by what means we have seen) ; and, besides a counting-house, it afforded apartments sufficiently commodious for his own dwelling. We have before alluded to his intention to abandon his paltry commerce in the nasty, or, as it is termed by the more imaginative, the "fragrant" weed, and undividedly to devote his energies to his more profitable operations ; so, accordingly, he disposed of his little plantation at Hackney, and his snuff and tobacco in Cow-lane,—all, all, even to those master-productions of the combined arts of sculpture and painting, the black-boy and the Highlander.

We are all by this time sufficiently well acquainted with the character of Mr. Quiddy to render it unnecessary to repeat what he did say, or to describe what he did *not* feel, when the recent event at Aberdeen was communicated to him : as a good-humoured friend of ours, to whom we have once already alluded, would in his Frenchified English express it, "That goes without to say" (*cela va sans dire*). For the same reason we shall abstain from troubling ourselves with what he said, or with what he really felt when he was made acquainted with the fortunate result to himself of that event :—it added certain hundreds to the previous acquirements of his "sheer industry," and that point was the all-absorbing one with our hero.

Of all the disagreeable operations which in the course of his long professional career the worthy McSquills had been called upon either to perform or to witness, the most harrowing to his own feelings, the most repugnant to his kindly nature, was the payment of the legacy to "Meester Queddy." His own last words to the legatee, when he had fulfilled his executorial duty, will best speak to that point. Having received Quiddy's signature to the discharge, which he (the doctor) had taken care to have drawn up in rigid legal form, he looked him full in the face, and putting the document into his pocket, said—

"There.—And noo, Meester Queddy, I hae but just this to say to ye. Three circumstances are wanting to mak' this office in the least a pleasure to me :—Old Nick for a banker ; the siller in his hands ; and I sending you with a cheque upon him for the payment o't. And so, good—and so *be dom'd to ye*, Meester—Queddy."

In pursuance of his resolution to retire from his profession, McSquills sold to his assistant his furniture, fixtures and glass bottles, together with what is called the "good-will" of his business—in the case of a retiring attorney it would, we presume, be the *ill-will* to be disposed of. Of his stock of drugs he made him a present. This was a munificent gift : for though intrinsically not worth five pounds, it might, when converted by the aid of the nearest pump into physic, be fairly estimated at a hundred. This done—

"Dr. McSquills, *P.P.C.*"

Let us shake hands with the worthy doctor at parting.

* * * * *

Now vanish, Mr Quiddy, tobacconist, of Cow-lane, Shoreditch, and reappear as Phineas Quiddy, merchant, (and, of course, Esquire,) of Mark-lane, Fenchurch-street.

CHAPTER XIX.

A short Chapter, which, treating with profound Philosophy of the Character and Consequences of the Quiddeian System of Trade, invites the Reader's earnest Attention.

THREE years have elapsed, and behold our "merchant" at the age of thirty, possessed of just so many thousands of pounds.

We will not hypercritically inquire whether Mr. Quiddy was justified by the nature of his dealings in assuming the style of "merchant :—" whether that term in its true, old-English, honest, honourable, and let us add, dignified sense, could be fairly applied to him ; whether, indeed, it was not degraded by such application. But how, otherwise, could he be properly described ? He was not a silk-mercier, and nothing more ; he was not a leather-seller, and nothing more ; nor a laceman merely, nor a linendraper, nor a hosier, nor an Indian-warehouseman, nor a Coventry-warehouseman, nor a Nottingham-warehouseman, nor simply a dealer in hats, or gloves, or shoes, or—in short, he was not one but Legion ; and to have described himself by all the various and multifarious branches of his business would have been troublesome and inconvenient. Some comprehensive term, therefore, that would embrace all, or most of, the branches of his business was requisite. We could have suggested one, and that perhaps the true one—*haberdasher* ; but applied to a man already of thirty thousand pounds, and with the prospect clear before him of multiplying those by ten, it would have been, to say the least of it, *ungenteel*. Well, except in so far as it regards the integrity of the English language, and the injury done to it by a habit of calling things

by wrong names, it does not much signify : so, since merchant he styled himself, why, merchant let him be.

"The great man in Mark-lane," as Mr. Quiddy was now commonly called by the small tradesmen in his neighbourhood, had, ever since his arrival there, been to them a subject both of wonder and alarm. Though their profits had not been large, they, for the greater part, had hitherto contrived to maintain themselves and their families respectably and in comfort : but small as were their gains, they now found that, in their several ways, not only were they undersold by Quiddy, but that in many cases he charged less for his wares than they must have cost the manufacturer.

Now, the tie that binds the purchaser to the shop-keeper is seldom of so refined or disinterested a kind as to induce the former to pay a shilling for a commodity if he can purchase it of any other for the twentieth part of a farthing less ; and the power of that tie, small as it is, diminishes in proportion as the advantages offered by that other increase. The consequence of this pitiable, but common, infirmity was, that gradually the oldest and best customers of those small tradesmen abandoned their shops for the *Emporium* of Quiddy, leaving them and Ruin to stare each other in the face. Still they went on wondering how it was that the great man could continue so materially to undersell them (knowing how small were their own profits), and yet manage to keep, as they expressed it, his head above water.

"Wonder," says Johnson, "is the effect of novelty upon ignorance ;" nor was it till they were enlightened by a practical illustration of the causes of that startling phenomenon that their wonder ceased. This explanation, sooner or later, the greater number of them received.

Our profound and extensive acquaintance with mankind has led us to the discovery of what we consider to be a fixed and immutable principle in human nature ;

and since we do not recollect it to have been ever before publicly propounded, and in set form, by any other philosopher, dead or alive, our vanity may be excusable if we claim some credit for its originality. It is nothing less than this : No man likes to be ruined, and would not be if he could help it. Now, operated on by this principle, those minor tradesmen, when they saw ruin approaching, took measures to avert it. Those measures were of greater or of less wisdom according to the quantity of that material which they severally possessed ; but generally, with them, temporizing—fighting against time—was the rule of conduct.

Venturing a bold comparison, we will say that an English man of business is, individually, *at the least* as tender of his credit as the Americans, as a nation, show themselves to be of theirs ; and he will sacrifice all, to the very last, in order to maintain it. When, therefore, either through his own mismanagement, or owing to adverse circumstances, he finds himself in difficulties, he will struggle on in the hope, however slender, of overcoming them, rather than expose his condition to the world—and every one has a little world of his own—till, in the end, bad has become worse. Whether this be the wise course of proceeding is therefore more than doubtful ; but it is almost invariably the case with an embarrassed man, of any rank or class, and more especially if he be also an honourable and a sensitive man, that he will continue the secret and soul-depressing struggle, hoping, and still hoping, that something, however unlikely to occur in the common course of things, may present itself in his individual case to extricate him. After all, in a country essentially commercial like England, where credit is the mainspring of commerce ; where the very life-blood of credit is punctuality of payment ; and where failure in this latter respect involves loss of credit and probable ruin,—it is not much a matter of astonishment that men in business should sometimes have recourse to expedients and con-

trivances (questionable though they be) to prolong that credit upon which little short of their existence depends—for, as we have before said, no man likes to be ruined.

It has been recommended to those who find Time heavy on hand, to imp his wings with a promissory note, for which they foresee a very reasonable chance of their being unprovided at the expiration of its term ; by this means the progress of the old gentleman is said to be accelerated amazingly. And so was it found to be by our small tradesmen. Ere the establishment of the all-grasping, all-devouring Quiddy, in their neighbourhood, had, by diminishing their business, reduced their gains, they could look forward unflinchingly to pay-day : *since* that untoward event, the two, three, or six months' date of their "promise to pay" seemed to be contracted to a span ; and Time, instead of approaching as heretofore, at a sober, gentlemanlike pace, appeared to hurry towards them with a fifty-lamplighter power of speed. The period was a season of terror to them—of anxious days and sleepless nights. Still were they doggedly bent upon not being ruined—if they could help it : so, to meet their approaching and pressing engagements, and thereby uphold their credit a little and a little longer, in the delusive hope that "things would take a favourable turn," they were compelled to sell their commodities, in sufficient quantities, for considerably less than it had cost to produce them : and Quiddy was always a sure and ready-money purchaser. And thus, one by one, were they enlightened by a practical solution of the great Quiddeian riddle which had for so long a time baffled their conjectures : and thus did Quiddy, the Monster-Haberdasher of *his* day, swallow up all the small fry of haberdashery that came within his reach.

Now, it is entirely away from our intention to amuse ourselves, and at the same time stupify the reader, by perpetrating a treatise on a branch of political economy but we will ask one question :—

“Is the Quiddeian system of trade, as it has here been explained—or, to speak out and speak truly, *exposed*—a wholesome system?”

Answer—by a Quiddeian :—

“Certainly it is ; for although it is ruining and gradually sweeping away a large and respectable class of people—the industrious and contented shopkeepers of small capital—it serves to aggrandize and bloat with wealth eight, ten, or a dozen of us meritorious Quiddys : *ergo*, the system is a wholesome system.”

But one question more :—“Does not the system *occasionally* offer facilities to fraud upon the manufac—?”

“Hush ! I have told you that the system is beneficial to the Quiddys, and that answer ought to satisfy any reasonable inquirer.”

“We are satisfied.”

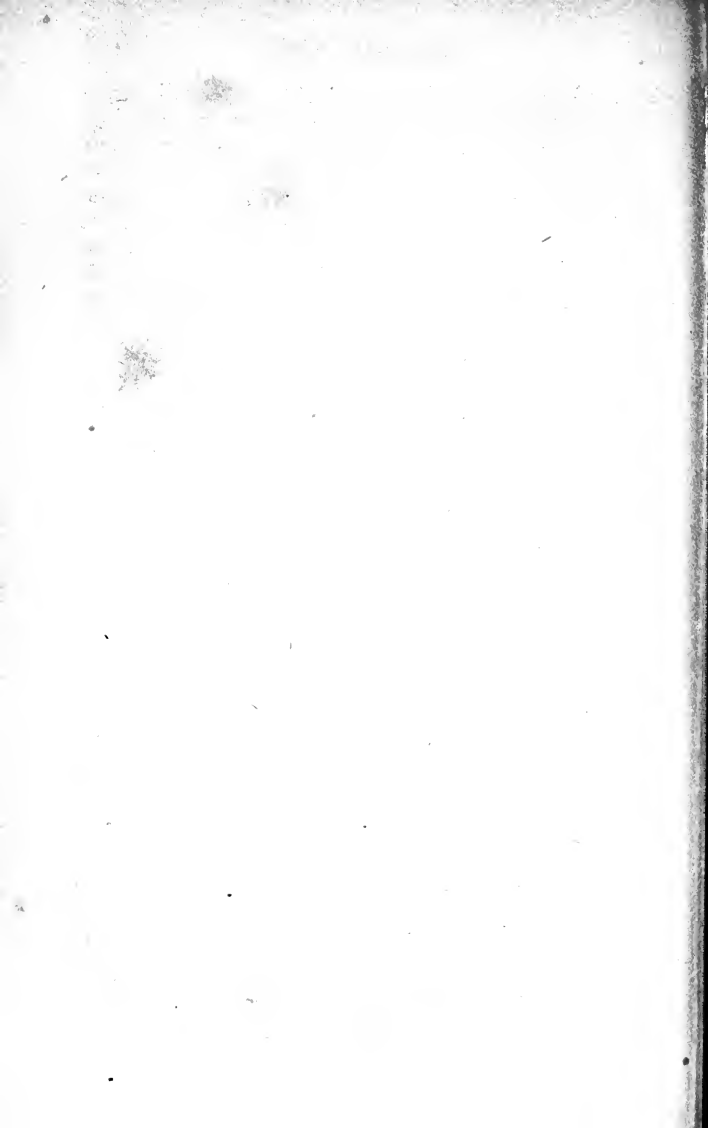
We think it not inexpedient in this place to recall attention to the words which occur just at the opening of our first chapter :—

“*Nothing* is a term sufficiently intelligible ; were it otherwise, there be thousands who could explain it, with Johnsonian precision, by simply turning their pockets inside out. But we apprehend that *Sheer Industry* is not of so definite a signification, and that (at least in the cases we have mentioned) it must mean industry—and *something more*. As to what that “something more” may be, we may perhaps be somewhat enlightened by using the career of Phineas Quiddy as our lexicon.”

To this end we have hitherto traced with some minuteness the progress of our hero, and in the same manner explained the means whereby he had converted *his* nothing into thirty good, substantial thousands of pounds. Having shown how the scrubby, selfish, low-minded, and low-principled shopboy had accomplished this wondrous transmutation, we might here take our leave of him : for since it is (to say the

least of it) as obvious that "money will make money," as how from nothing may be made something, it may without further explanation be understood how Quiddy, with so broad a foundation of wealth to build upon, should have gone easily on, piling thousand upon thousand, until he had become one of the wealthiest men in the city. Unless, therefore, any circumstance worthy of particular notice should occur, we shall return to him no more in his money-manufactory, but just glance at his conduct in the new position to which wealth has entitled him to aspire.

END OF PART THE FIRST.



PART THE SECOND.

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CHAPTER XX.

Our Hero assumes a new and more elevated Position in Society —Becomes acquainted with a Lady who, spite of present Appearances, may probably contribute to a very important Change in his Condition.

NATURE is an obstinate old lady, who will have her own way : she will not easily permit her intentions to be frustrated. True, you may catch her napping, and play her a trick *once* ; but, that discovered, she will not allow you to improve your advantage. A mule is neither all horse nor all donkey, but—Nature is still more obstinate than the hybrid.* You cannot, by any process of cultivation with which we are at present acquainted, convert potatoes into pine-apples ; nor induce red cabbages to become roses ; nor can you—and this illustration is more to our purpose—nor can you by any known contrivance, physical, artistical, or mechanical, produce a silken purse from the ear of a mother of little pigs. We might have conveyed this illustration in form more compact by simply adopting the well-known proverb, ‘ You can’t make a

* When Louis XVIII. was in exile at Holyrood, his Majesty allowed himself to be kidnapped by the manager of the Edinburgh playhouse (at that time not quite on a par, perhaps, with the *Théâtre Français*), to honour with his presence the performance of a *tragedy*. On the following morning the manager waited upon the King, and, thanking him for his gracious condescension, expressed his hope that his Majesty had been pleased with the entertainments.

“ *O, charmant !—delightful !—beautiful, very !*” replied Louis, as in common civility he was bound to do.

“ Then,” said the manager, “ I may hope your Majesty will condescend to name a night for your next visit.”

“ No—no,” hastily replied the King ; “ *once of such fun is enough.*”

So says Nature in like instances with that which we have cited :—“ *Once of such fun is enough.*”

silken purse out of a sow's ear ;" but as we hold it to be vastly ungenteel to quote a popular saying (except, indeed, in some foreign language, dead or alive), we prefer rather to be circumlocutory than defile our page by the use of it.

The new position, then, which wealth entitled our hero to assume, was that of gentleman ; but as, by force of Nature, he had been a scrubby, selfish, low-minded, low-principled shopboy, and as these characteristics abided by him upwards in his career, so was he now a scrubby, selfish, low-minded, low-principled gentleman. Gentleman !—But we are not accountable for the abuse or the misapplication of terms : we must take them as we find them current : he was a man of wealth, *ergo*——

It was now but a matter of course that Quiddy's society should be much courted. His company was eagerly sought after by the highest and most distinguished families in his neighbourhood ; by some, even, whose chiefs enjoyed the honour of being common-councilmen. Scarcely was a dinner-party given to which he was not invited. By families where the daughters had much to expect from their fathers, he was invited sometimes ; where little, often ; where nothing, still oftener. By the mothers of the first class he was considered to be far from ugly, and not so very disagreeable ; by class 2, quite handsome enough for a man—" But not for a woman," as one sly girl replied)—and vastly pleasant ; whilst the mammas No. 3 vowed and protested he was positively charming. All this, carefully reported to Quiddy, could not but be flattering to him. But although he swallowed their compliments as freely as he did their dinners, the daughters were (to use his own expression) at a discount. As well might you hope to induce a wary old jack to quit its watery home by the offer of a bare, unbaited hook, as to trepan him into matrimony with a dowerless daughter.

In the meantime he continued to accept their dinners ; for, as he prudently considered, by that he

saved expense ; and being a bachelor, without an establishment, he was absolved from the necessity of paying them in kind. To do him justice, however, he was continually hinting at the delight it would be to him to return the hospitalities of his friends *if ever he should marry* ; besides which, he never failed to present the mammas and grown-up daughters with a tooth-brush each on their respective birthdays (*a queer present, but such was the FACT*) ; whilst to the younger children, when they were served up with the dessert, he was liberal almost to profusion in bestowing fruit, cakes, and sweetmeats—from their parents' tables. With Herod's "favourite aversions," therefore, he was deservedly popular. Not so with that proverbially dissatisfied and ungrateful tribe, the servants. These "base ingrates" (to use a melodramatic phrase) were wont to speak of him as "that stingy hound," although he made it a rule to give to one servant in each family he dined with five-and-twenty times in the year, half-a-crown at Christmas. He made it a rule also (such was his delicacy !) to present his donation with so studied an attempt at concealment, that the act was certain to be observed by one or other of the family, and reported accordingly.

Yet had he for some time past resolved upon marrying, if he could find any ten thousand pounds who should be willing to have him ; nor was it long ere he had the good fortune to discover what he sought.

To the ten thousand pounds to which he paid his addresses, was appended Miss Honoria St. Egremont, a—a maiden lady. But wherefore hesitate ? for we believe that, according to custom, we are perfectly in order in so describing her, she being two-and-thirty, and unmarried. Some, indeed, might have used a term less considerate. And hence arises a question that has always perplexed us ; for though a married woman of that age is considered to be a young woman, yet, for some reason or other, of which we have not the most remote idea, one *unmarried* is always looked upon as

an——Hold ! rather than pursue the point, we will abide by the perilous responsibility of describing a lady who is detected in the fact of being unmarried at thirty-two, as a *maiden lady*.

But as concerning the lady in question, we must for a brief space retrograde in our narrative.

About fourteen years prior to the period which we are now treating of, Honoria St. Egremont, being then in her eighteenth year, and passably pretty, was invited by a kind uncle to live in his house and manage his little establishment. This uncle was Mr. Slymore, a bachelor of fifty, who had just then retired from business as an underwriter at Lloyd's. In this pursuit the winds and waves had, upon the whole, behaved to him like friends who wished him well, and his ventures had been generally successful. But Slymore knew right well that his friends were by nature fickle : so having acquired sufficient to enable him to pass the rest of his bachelor-life in ease and comfort ; and wisely reflecting that as in a fit of caprice they might some time or another play him a slippery trick, as they had often done to others, he gratefully thanked them for their kind forbearance past, shook hands, and took his leave of them. He purchased the lease of a pretty, snug cottage in Lisson Grove, to which he betook himself, and (relieved from the anxieties of his hazardous profession)——

“Now,” thought he, “though the winds

‘blow

All the quarters that they know

I’ th’ shipman’s card,’

here may I sleep o’ nights undisturbed by thoughts of how much each gust may cost me.”

The invitation of this uncle Miss St. Egremont accepted ; and Slymore, *being* her uncle, very properly introduced the lady to his friends as his niece——his “niece from the country.” But as it was perfectly well known that Slymore was the only child of his

parents, consequently that he never had had either brother or sister, these matter-of-fact people were puzzled to make out the relationship. However, as he gave good dinners and excellent wine, there could not long exist any doubt upon the subject ; so uncle and niece they one and all admitted them to be. Even if not—it is a thing of common occurrence, and perfectly allowable, for a childless, elderly gentleman to adopt some deserving young female as a *daughter* ; why not, then, as a niece, or even a cousin, if so it please him ? As to Quiddy (judging from the result, and aware as we are of the sensitive delicacy of his mind), that *he* believed in the genuineness of the relationship there can be no doubt.

As our business is not with Uncle Slymore, except as the accidental introducer of Quiddy to his niece Honoria, we shall state briefly that it was not till near the close of his earthly career that he made acquaintance with the wealthy haberdasher. Once, and once only, he invited him to meet a party at dinner at the cottage, and upon that occasion it was that Quiddy became acquainted with the niece of his entertainer. Now, Slymore himself was a pleasant little fellow, and loved pleasant company ; while Quiddy being——But a short conversation which occurred between uncle and niece after the party had broken up, will, better than a formal description, exhibit him such as he was at this time.

“My dear *Tom*,” (!) said the *niece* to her *uncle*, “where *did* you pick up that tall, lanky, knock-knee’d, disagreeable Mr. Quidsy, or Quibsy, or whatever his name is ?”

“I met the fellow, my dear Norey,” said the *uncle* to the *niece*—“I met the fellow at dinner the other day at Sir Gog Cheshire’s, in Finsbury-square—Cheshire, formerly the eminent cheesemonger, you know, in Bishopsgate-street—for this Quiddy, being enormously rich, gets into the highest society.”

"But why invite him here, Tom?"

"Why, my love, I couldn't well help it. He was close at my elbow when I asked two or three of the men who were here to-day; and so, you know—"

"And such a vulgar person, Tom! Then what a life he leads the poor H's, with his 'ouse and his 'ome, and his *heyes* and his *hears*! and the fastidious care with which he misplaces the unfortunate V's and W's, emphasizing his blunders in ostentatious display of his imagined accuracy: 'I don't like to see a woman travel except in a *weil*'—Ha! ha! ha!"

"Upon which," said Slymore, "I whispered to Harry Scott, 'I hope she'll be better pleased with her conveyance than Jonah was.'—However, I shouldn't care much for his vulgarity, my love, if there were anything in him, nor for the manner of his speech if his conversation were good; but he's such a heavy, prosy dog!"

"Such as he is," said the niece, "he scarcely spoke a word till he had swallowed four or five glasses of champagne."

"And then," said the uncle, "he prosed and bored our very heads off about his 'rise in life,' and his 'sheer industry,' and the 'few thousands, *or so*, of his own.' By-the-bye, my love, it is a great mistake to give a stupid fellow champagne in the hope of making him lively. A man who can talk well, it will generally assist to talk better: it brightens his imagination, and gives wings to his tongue; but to your stupid, dull rogue, it just serves to loosen his heavy organ, and sets it lumbering and rumbling drowsily on, like a broad-wheeled wagon."

"And how ridiculously pompous he is!" continued Honoria.

"That's his notion of dignity," said Slymore. "And then, like all upstarts, he is either arrogant and overbearing, or insolently condescending."

"And judging by his looks, Tom, I should think he's a very ill-tempered person."

"I should think so too ; and, certainly, he's plaguy touchy. Just after you left the dining-room, George Hancock civilly offered him his snuff-box, saying, ' Do you take snuff, Mr. Quiddy ? ' whereupon Quiddy drew himself up, as if he would have lifted his head off his own shoulders, and to the great astonishment of Georgey (who did not know that he commenced life as a petty tobacconist) said, with ludicrous dignity, ' Do you mean to be personal, sir ? ' However, I sent round the wine, and turned the conversation."

"Well, my dear Tom, I hope you wont ask him again."

"No, no, my love. He doesn't suit my book—thorough snob—stupid *homo*—consequential ass ; and such, in spite of his wealth, will he remain to the end of the chapter. Doesn't come here again, you may rely on it."

And he kept his word ; for from that time he and Quiddy never met again.

CHAPTER XXI.

Quiddy treats himself to the Play—An Unexpected Meeting—
He is informed of an Important Fact—A Provoking Mistake
—A Rainy Night not without its Advantages either to the
Hackney Coachman or his Fare.

SOME months after his visit to the cottage, it happened one evening that Quiddy resolved to treat himself—a person for whom he entertained so affectionate a regard as never to refuse him enjoyment of anything that might conduce to his pleasure—to treat himself to the pit of Covent-Garden Theatre. Although the evening's entertainment was to consist of nothing more than a tragedy and a farce (*Macbeth*, and *Raising the Wind*), without the assistance of a short opera at the beginning,

a little interlude in the middle, and a ranting melodrama at the end, to protract the performance till within a few hours of breakfast-time the next morning: although there was not the individual attraction of a star at fifty pounds a night, but merely the regular company of the theatre, including Mrs. Siddons, John Kemble, and Charles—Lewis, Emery, Mrs. Davenport, and such like—notwithstanding these drawbacks, the doors were besieged by crowds long before their opening. Quiddy, however, knowing nothing of the persons by whom he was surrounded, consequently holding himself absolved from any attention to their convenience, and feeling himself bound to bestow all his cares upon the party he was treating to the play, did, by dint of squeezing, sideling, and elbowing, contrive to make his way to one of the best places on the fourth bench from the orchestra.

Immediately after he had taken his seat, two ladies placed themselves upon the bench next behind him. One of them was in deep mourning; and whether it were that the dress became her, or that she really was a handsome woman, she certainly appeared so. We must explain that she was not in widow's weeds—a dress which is so very becoming, that few women positively dislike to wear it, while some, indeed, entertain an extreme longing for it. Her age might be thirty—certainly not less: her companion was considerably older. The dress of the latter was of that nondescript kind—a compromise between the natural inclination towards the fine and showy, and the professional demand for the plain and neat—which generally characterizes the London lodging-house keeper.

Quiddy, upon looking at the lady in black, though he thought he had seen her before, was uncertain of it. She did not appear to recognise him. He looked again and again, and the who, the when, and the where, came faintly upon his recollection. Still was he not certain. Awkward and low-bred, he could not open

a conversation with her, which a gentleman and a man of the world would readily have done. Between *men* who are strangers to each other, a snuff-box is an admirable medium for such a purpose : under circumstances like Quiddy's, a play-bill is a sublime invention. But in this he was unfortunate, for since both the lady and himself each held one in their hand, he could neither borrow nor offer to lend. All at once, accident relieved him from his difficulty.

"That's Quiddy, the great what-do-they-call-it, in Mark-lane," said some one who knew his person to his companion.

This was spoken loud enough to be heard by the lady in black, who thereupon intimated her recognition of the great "what-do-they-call-it" by a slight inclination of the head.

Quiddy now was, as he would have expressed it, all "cock-a-hoop." Affecting the gay and the affable, without forgetting the dignified, he made what he considered to be the perfection of a bow (not bending his head, but just forcing his chin down into his cravat and drawing it out again), and said—

"Bless my soul, miss, how uncommon droll ! Thought I know'd you from the first ; but as I warn't sure, why—Miss St. Egremont, eh ? Sure I couldn't be mistaken. This lady I don't think I ever—"

"Mrs. Fleecer, sir," said Miss St. Egremont,

"Ha ! Mrs. Fleecer—hope I see you quite well, marm. Long time since I had the honour of seeing *you*, miss : not since the day I had the honour of having the pleasure of coming to eat a bit of dinner with you at Lisson Grove."

Whilst saying this he kept rubbing his hands, giving them an occasional slap at the back, and every now and then bobbing his chin in and out of his cravat. The tone, too, in which he delivered himself was—but why need we particularize ? In a word—he took it for granted that the world might now ask in vain what

he had done with Phineas Quiddy, of Cow-lane, Shoreditch.

"At Lisson Grove, sir?" said Miss St. Egremont "that was several months ago."

"It was, miss. But how uncommon well you're looking!"

Miss St. Egremont smiled.

"Why, to *look* at you, miss," continued the complimentary gentleman, "one wouldn't take you to be more than eight or nine and twenty—thirty at the very outside."

Miss St. Egremont did *not* smile.

"And pray, miss, how may your dear, good uncle happen to be?"

At this question, Honoria St. Egremont drew from her pocket a fine cambric handkerchief and covered her eyes with it. Her example was followed by her companion with one of coarser material, but, as a compensation for the difference, excruciatingly scented with bergamot. The latter stooped forward, and putting her lips close to the speaker's ear, whispered—

"Dear me, sir, don't you know? He has been gone nearly three weeks."

"Has he indeed! And when is he expected back again?" inquired our obtuse friend.

Mrs. Fleecer pointed significantly to Honoria's mourning-dress.

"How uncommon stupid of me; quite shocked, I declare. Ahem!—But I say, marm: not quite three weeks, and yet—"

Perhaps Mrs. Fleecer inferred from the unfinished question something which she considered to require a decent explanation, for she prevented its completion by saying—

"The truth is, the poor thing is in such a dreadful state of spirits that I persuaded her to come here for an hour or two, just to banish thought."

"Ha! I shouldn't wonder—Ahem!—But," (in a

cautious whisper), “but, as to the main chance, marm? I hope Slymore has taken care of her!”

“Oh, sir,” replied the lady in a similar manner, “he has behaved like a perfect gentleman. Having no relations—I mean no *other relation*; he—that’s to say her *uncle*, put her down in his will for ten thousand pounds.”

“Whe-e-wh!—Ten!—Ten thou—!”

Here the rising of the curtain cut short the conversation. But the play proceeded unregarded by Quiddy. That he could not understand or appreciate a line of the author, need scarcely be said; but even the more palpable sublimity of the acting of Kemble and Siddons, which might have stirred stocks and stones, was lost upon him. His thoughts were occupied by “ten thousand” other matters. Occasionally, indeed, he raised his glass to his eye, but the act was merely mechanical; he was unconscious of what he was looking at; nor was he roused from his reverie till the scene where the panic-stricken soldier, rushing upon the stage, cries,

“There is ten thousand—”

At these words, which somehow connected themselves with what was passing in his own mind, he almost involuntarily turned round, and, sighing, cast a sheepish look at Miss St. Egremont. And when in reply to *Macbeth’s* impatient question,

“Geese, villain?”

the same terrified hero replied

“Soldiers,”

Quiddy (who was far from being a first-rate Shakspearian) thought “pounds” should have been the true reading.

The tragedy ended,—“Ecod, I’ll try and make myself agreeable to her,” thought he; “I can’t lose anything by that; and, as most women are amused by

small-talk, I'll give her a sample of my powers in that line."

Small talk it was—and, truly, of the smallest. As for example :—

"Ahem !—Prodigious full the house is, miss !"

"Ahem !—How uncommon warm it is, miss !"

"Ahem !—Don't you think Mrs. Siddons a nice performer, miss !"

"Ahem !—I saw her off the stage once, miss !"

"Ahem !—Kemble's a tall man, miss. Indeed, the part would be nothing without a tall man in it, miss. Height is everything for Macbeth."

"Ahem !—Don't you think 'Macbeth' a sweet pretty play, miss ?"

To these, and to a hundred other questions and remarks of equal originality and point, the lady replied, "Yes, sir,"—"No, sir,"—"Indeed, sir!"—as the case might require.

To any one but our gentleman himself, it would have been evident that by all this the lady was *bored*; but it is the paramount characteristic of the true bore that (to use Slymore's expression) he will "bore your very head off," with as little consciousness of what he is inflicting upon you, as the more agreeable, because the less tedious operator, an eight-and-forty pounder.

Notwithstanding the amazing resources of his mind, Quiddy's powers of conversation began at length to flag; nor did the inhuman lady supply the smallest modicum of fuel to the fire of his talk, either by proposing a question, or by originating a remark, which might have kept alive the flame. To one even of a more lively imagination than his, this is a trying predicament. He felt himself all but burnt out. The materials in his head being exhausted, he searched his pockets for something that might possibly suggest a topic; but in vain.

But as it frequently happens to one to be turning the house topsy-turvy in quest of the ring which all

the while he has on his finger, or the spectacles which are on his nose, so did it chance with him. His opera-glass!—a trifle which, like many trifles in this world, was destined to assist in forwarding an important event—his opera-glass was in his very hand! Here was a fresh start for him. He requested Miss St. Egremont to “take a look through it”—he expatiated on its merits—told her where he had bought it, and when, to the very day and the very hour—how much he had paid for it, to a fraction:—“Two p’und-five—that’s to say, miss, bating two-and-threepence discount, at five *per cent.* for ready money.”

At this last remark, Miss St. Egremont removed the glass from her eye, and cast at Quiddy an indescribable sort of look. She said something in praise of the instrument, and handed it to Mrs. Fleecer. The latter praised it vehemently, and returned it to its owner.

“Yes, ladies,” said he, “everybody gives my hopera-glass an ’igh character.”

“An *eye* character is the most satisfactory one which an opera-glass can receive,” said Honoria; who, infected by the vicious example of her late uncle, occasionally ventured a pun.

“You are very flattering to say so,” said the impenetrable haberdasher. And having exhausted this subject, he was again floored. But relief was at hand, for the afterpiece commenced.

Throughout the whole of the first act Quiddy was occupied in revolving in his mind a point of considerable importance. He was, as it were, composing a “Raising the Wind” of his own. His opera-glass was evidently concerned in his cogitations; for frequently in the course of them he looked at it, turning it about in all manner of ways.

“I will,” thought he, as the curtain fell to the first act of the afterpiece—“I *will*—ten thousand pounds—worth making a dash for—it is but two-p’und-two-and-

ninepence after all ; and if she *should* accept it, who knows what may come of it."

Thus resolved, he half turned round on his seat, and, without venturing to look the object of his thoughts in the face, said in a hesitating, awkward, sheepish manner—

"You—you admired this, and—and if you *would* accept it, I—I'm sure I—"

To his infinite satisfaction the glass was instantly seized, when, upon looking up, his eyes met those of Mrs. Fleecer!

"La, sir!" said she, "I'm sure you are monstrous polite. I'm almost ashamed to deprive you of it ; but, since you are so kind, I—" Then addressing herself to Miss St. Egremont, who had all this time been standing and looking another way, she continued—"Do but see what the gentleman has given me. Well, I declare, I never did meet with anything half so polite."

Miss St. Egremont whispered to her something about the impropriety of accepting a present from a stranger ; and Quiddy, mortified and confused, began to stammer an explanation of the mistake ; but ere he had time to deliver himself of three words, the precious object found itself in the "lower deep" of Mrs. Fleecer's capacious pocket, in company with a bunch of keys, a quantity of halfpence, a pincushion, a pair of scissors, a lump of orris-root, and a nutmeg-grater. Whether or not the rapidity of this movement was occasioned by any suspicion in the lady's mind of the possibility of a mistake, we cannot say ; but fortunately for her, explanation was prevented (for the present, at any rate) by the return of a person who, a short time before, had quitted the theatre. With true English politeness, thrusting his head between the parties, this person called to two young women (apparently his daughters) who were a few seats off, and told them that, as it was pouring of rain, they had better come away, as, later, they might have some difficulty in procuring a coach.

"Pouring of rain!" exclaimed Honoria to Mrs. Fleecer: "then we had better go too."

Quiddy for the moment forgetting his loss, eagerly availed himself of this fortunate accident. He offered his services in procuring a coach, which was gladly accepted; so giving his arm to the ten-thousand-pounder, and followed by her companion, he triumphantly marched forth.

Rainy nights are the hackney-coachman's Saturnalia. Upon these occasions the Hackney Coach Act—the law which in more genial weather keeps Jarvey as honest and civil as in hackney-coachman nature it is possible to be—is, by general and tacit consent, considered a dead letter. It therefore needed not that our party should see and hear the pelting shower to convince them that there *was* a pelting shower; for long ere they reached the piazza, they were made aware of the fact by hoarse cries of "Four shillings to the Temple!" "Three shillings to Somerset House!" "Seven shillings to Newman-street!" "Half-a-crown to over the way!" and so forth.

Quiddy called a link-boy—for in those days of invisible lamp-light there were link-boys in the land—and desired him to bring a coach.

"Where to, your honour? Shocking bad night, your honour!"

"Lisson-grove," was the reply.

The lynx-eyed functionary—(N.B. No pun is intended)—a proficient in his vocation, seeing the gentleman with only one lady in his company (for Mrs. Fleecer was behind them), and that lady a showy-looking woman in spite of her deep mourning dress, instantly, to the great consternation of the gentleman who had received permission to see his companions safe home, ran off bellowing, "Twelve shillings to Lisson-grove!" Now, why Lisson-grove and a lady combined should aggravate the expense of hackney-coach travelling is a mystery which we are not prepared to solve: but such was the fact.

"Not Lisson-grove," said Miss St. Egremont hastily, "we are only going to Surrey-street."

The boy was recalled, and the error rectified.

"Five shillings to Surrey-street!" shouted the boy, who seemed to consider himself empowered to use his own discretion in settling the terms between the parties. After some trouble in procuring one, he brought up a coach.

Quiddy, having handed the ladies in, and followed them, desired jarvey to drive on, and was hastily drawing up the side-glass when he was saluted with—

"Please to remember the link-boy, your honour. Shocking bad night, your honour! Good deal of trouble to get a coach your honour!"

This appeal was irresistible; Quiddy threw the boy a halfpenny, and the coach moved onwards to its destination. Hereupon the young gentleman taking up the *money*, violently threw it back to the donor, and bestowed upon him and his companions, a string of epithets which (though delivered in a voice *not* "in-audible in the gallery") we forbear to repeat. Quiddy, re-pocketing his coin, angrily observed, "This is too bad!" adding, "there's no satisfying these rascals, *give them what one will.*"

Meantime, for reasons best known to themselves, the ladies were occupied in noisily letting down and pulling up the glass on the opposite side of the coach; nor was it till they were quite clear of the piazza that they succeeded in adjusting it to their satisfaction. This done, Quiddy said,

"Then you are not going to the Cottage to-night, miss?"

"I abandoned it a fortnight ago—for ever," replied Honoria, mournfully shaking her head.

"Ah! I can understand your motive, miss," said he, in a sympathizing tone.

"With every object around me to remind me of my loss!" continued the afflicted lady.

"Ah! poor thing!" sighed Mrs. Fleecer; "besides, the lease was out, and the landlord would not renew it. And, then—the distance from all places of amusement!"

Miss St. Egremont trod heavily on the speaker's toe—the corn-toc, *par excellence*.

"Ah—well!—It is some comfort he cut up so well," said the delicate-minded haberdasher.

But this observation was unheard by the ladies, as, at the moment of its utterance, jarvey rattled down the front window and bawled in—"What street did you say, sir?"

Mrs. Fleecer having told him "Surrey-street," he again drove on./

"Then it is there you are living?" said the gentleman, inquiringly.

Mrs. Fleecer (who, as we have already hinted, was one of the respectable sisterhood of lodging-house keepers) replied for her:

"She is lodging with me, sir; she is my drawing rooms. Better for her, I am sure, than moping alone in that place." And she continued—(for chattering "is the badge of all her tribe")—"Besides I have known her for years, ever since she came to me as—"

Another and a heavier tread on the identical toe lately introduced to notice, and which caused the speaker to wince, occasioned also the suspension of her intended information. Miss St. Egremont turned the conversation into another subject, which occupied the time till the coach reached her lodgings.

Rat-tat-tat. The street-door was opened by a yawning, half-asleep servant-maid, carrying in her hand an unsnuffed candle in a flat candlestick. The gallant alighted from the coach and handed the ladies into the narrow passage, or, as it was nicknamed by Mrs. Fleecer, the *hall*.

"That stupid girl always forgets to light the hall-lamp," cried Mrs. Fleecer—not reflecting how difficult

it is for a poor girl to remember to do what she had never been *told* to do.

A short altercation occurred between Miss St. Egremont and the gentleman as to who should pay for the coach, which ended by the latter magnanimously insisting upon it that that was his "affair." Although it was still raining hard, Quiddy, instead of calling the man into the passage, went into the street, and, drawing him sufficiently away to be out of hearing of the ladies, inquired, in a half-whisper, what was his fare.

"Five shillings, your honour."

"Five shillings! why, the distance is scarcely half-a-mile! 'Tis but a shilling fare."

"I've nothing to do with distance," said jarvey, holding out his open hand; "five shillings is what was agreed for, and you know it."

Quiddy reluctantly payed the demand, at the same time threatening the man with a summons. The latter still standing with his outstretched, open hand—for was ever one of his class satisfied without a something more than the already too much—Quiddy inquired what he meant by that, as he had been paid what had been agreed for.

"*Agreed* for, sir?" said the coachman, in a tone of remonstrance; "*that* I've a right to; but I hope you'll give me summut over and above, considering what a horrid rainy night it is."

"What! five shillings for a shilling fare, and, now,—! You'll get no more of me. As to paying more than the fare for *bad* weather, would you have allowed me discount if the weather had been fine?"

Having said this, he re-entered the passage.

But the precaution he had adopted to avoid standing ill in the opinion of the ladies upon the score of liberality, was defeated by jarvey, who, following him to the door, roared out—

"Allow you discount, indeed! Ha! ha! ha! A

reg'lar shabby one! I say, ladies, you've got a friend here as wants discount!"

Having said this, he remounted his box and drove away.

The ladies, who were still in the *hall*, thanked the gallant for his polite attention to them, but, not a little to his disappointment, made the lateness of the hour a pretext for not inviting him to walk in. He expressed a hope that he might be allowed to call upon Miss St. Egremont, and inquire concerning her health; but this civility she declined as, under her "present circumstances," she received no visitors. By this apparent disinclination on the part of the ten-thousand-pounder to extend her acquaintance with him, he was somewhat disconcerted. But he was not to be entirely baffled. Fixing his eye upon an umbrella which was standing in a corner, he said that, having discharged that extortionate scoundrel of a coachman, upon account of his insolence, and as it was still raining hard, he should be obliged if they could lend him "such a thing as an umbrella."

With this request Mrs. Fleecer eagerly complied, handing him the one in question.

"Anything to oblige *you*, sir, who have been so polite to me. This," added she, in her lodging-house jargon, "this belongs to my parlours, who is gone out of town; but as he will return to-morrow night and may want it, I beg, sir, you will *bring* it back in the morning."

There was a marked emphasis on the word *bring* which was not displeasing to Quiddy, who, promising punctuality, made one of his most elegant bows and departed. Him, for the present, must we leave to his wet walk, his cogitations, and his kind wishes concerning the present proprietor of his opera-glass, and remain with the ladies in Surrey-street.

CHAPTER XXII.

A comfortable after-the-play Supper, which leads to uncomfortable Reminiscences—A doubtful Point between Asparagus and the Wing of a Chicken ; but—*Honi soit que mal y pense.*

THE moment the street-door was closed, and even ere they allowed themselves time to throw aside their bonnets and shawls, Honoria and Mrs. Fleecer refreshed themselves with a draught of that beverage which upon ordinary occasions is called, and in fact is, nothing more than *porter* ; but which, by a long sitting in a close, warm theatre, is refined, sublimated, etherealized, and becomes—swoon, Sir Daffodil Fitz-Faddle, swoon at the barbarous idea ! but true it is—Nectar. They then sat down to a nice little supper (which was served in Mrs. Fleecer's room on the ground-floor), consisting of a hot roast chicken and asparagus. While this was making its *dis*-appearance (the servant-maid being in attendance) they spoke but little, and that little (in addition to an occasional exclamation of admiration on the part of Mrs. Fleecer of the "gentleman's present," which was displayed on the table) was principally touching legs, wings, and sidesmen, liver, gizzard, and "*grass.*"

Betty having cleared the table and left the room, to bring materials for warm negus, and Honoria being engaged in refreshing her memory by looking over the play-bill ; Mrs. Fleecer left her seat, and, negligently humming a tune, went to a cupboard in a corner—her back being towards her fair lodger. The latter looked up, and perceiving that the head of Mrs. Fleecer was thrown rather backwards, and her right elbow elevated

a few degrees above the level of her mouth, cried, somewhat sharply—

“Fleecer! Fleecer! what *are* you at there?”

Fleecer hastily replaced a *something*, which caused a slight, dull sound as it touched the shelf; and, closing the cupboard, replied with a simper—

“The grass, dear; just on account of the grass.”

What was the real nature of the little incident which produced the question and the reply to it, we forbear to inquire.

The servant having been sent to bed, and the ladies being left to themselves, Miss Honoria St. Egremont, in a tone rather savouring of displeasure, thus began:

“I am exceedingly vexed, Fleecer.”

“Bless my soul! Why, what can have vexed you? I’m sure we have passed a very pleasant evening.”

“*You* have vexed me. First of all by accepting a present from a perfect stranger. Then to tell him that I left the Cottage because the lease was out! And again, to talk about its distance from places of public amusement! What must he think of me under my present circumstances, when such a reason as that is given for—”

“Oh! nonsense, dear,” said Fleecer, interrupting her; “he paid no attention to what I said: it ran in at one ear and out at the other with him.”

“The truth is, Fleecer, when once you begin to talk you have no command over your tongue. If I had not trod upon your toe till I thought I had trodden it off, you would just have blurted out that—”

“Oh—that you once lived with me in an humble capacity—servant-maid in short? No, no; there’s reason in roasting of eggs; I should have stopped short of that, naturally, without your hint—which went to my very heart, let me tell you. No, no; you know me too well for that, Nanny dear.”

“There again! Nanny! I declare, Fleecer, if you

are not more discreet I shall be obliged to quit your house, and never see you again ; or you'll get me into sad trouble some day or other."

"Well, well," said Fleecer, good-humouredly (at the same time concocting for herself a second glass of negus), "it's only between ourselves : if any stranger were here, I should be on my guard. And do you know, Nan—ahem?—Honorina, your being in the house again does so remind me of old times. It seems to me only like yesterday, though it's a good fourteen years ago, when poor Mr. Slymore, who was my drawing-room at that time, and—"

"But there's no need of being reminded of old times," said Miss St. Egremont, peevishly. "You were always very kind to me, I own : but if you wish that we should remain friends, I must insist upon it that you *forget* old times and remember only the present, and who I am now."

"Ay, ay, I understand, dear ; that's quite right and proper. For the future I shall think no more of Nanny Streggers than if there never had been such a person in the world. What a sweet pretty change ! Streggers, St. Egremont !—Nanny, Honorina ! Well, poor Slymore had a deal of taste in all things, that we must both allow. And with regard to you, dear—"

"Mrs. Fleecer you had better take no more of that negus ; you have put a great deal too much wine to it, and it makes your tongue run till really you don't know what you are talking about."

"As weak as water, I protest," said Fleecer : who, knowing not the art, in conversation, of stopping at the proper point—of "letting well alone," as it were—rattled on in perfect good-humour, and without the slightest intention to offend. "No, no, Norey—you know poor Tom used to call you Norey—I can be as discreet and silent as a brick wall, when there's need for it : but when by ourselves, I do delight in a little chatter. Besides, you know I love you as if you were

a daughter of my own—as, indeed, you might be considering the difference of our ages.”

“Of course,” said Honoria, with a gracious inclination of the head.

“Of course,” continued the loquacious lady, “for there’s nearly twenty years’ difference between us, as I am fifty-two turned, and you will not be three-and-thirty these five weeks. But what *is* three-and-thirty?” rapidly continued Fleecer, perceiving an indication of displeasure on Honoria’s countenance. “What would I give to be three-and-thirty again, and with such a figure and face as yours—and such an education! Well, to his praise be it spoken, poor S. did do his duty to you in that respect, Only to think! when first you came to me, you could neither read nor write, while now—”

“Come, Fleecer, come,” said Honoria, impatiently; “finish your negus, and let us go to bed, do.”

—“While, now, as I was going to say, French, Italian, music, drawing, dancing! I’m sure, from your appearance and manner, everybody must take you to have been a lady born;—”

Honoria smiled approval.

“—While your poor mother, rest her soul! kept a fruit-stall in Covent-garden-market, and your father was—”

“Really, Mrs. Fleecer, this is no longer to be endured!” said the other, about to rise, while a tear stole from her eye.

Fleecer gently placed her hand upon Honoria’s arm to detain her, and with unaffected kindness said—

“This is between ourselves, my dear girl; I meant no harm. We can’t help who were our fathers and mothers: they are no fault of ours, though sometimes our misfortune, I own. We are born whether we like it or not, and nobody asks us whom we would choose for our fathers and mothers. I’ve lived long enough in the world to know *that*, my dear Norey.”

This assertion of her acquired knowledge was accompanied by a bending of the head, of gravity befitting its importance, and also by preparations for a third glass of negus.

"Now, really, Fleecer," said Honoria, "this is very wrong of you. This is the third, and you are talking all manner of absurdities, as it is : why can't you be satisfied with one, as I am? And then—remember the cupboard."

"A thimbleful, dear—not a thimbleful. Besides, I'm an old woman. When I was a young girl, like you, indeed—ah ! Norey : if I had my time to come over again, and were young and handsome as you are—I'm sure *this* can't hurt anybody," continued the speaker, sipping her glass : "Negus indeed ! water bewitched ! But, as I was going to say, if I were young and handsome as—"

"There ! make yourself one nice, good glass, my dear Fleecer, but pray let it be the last, for it is growing late," said Honoria, mollified by her companion's complimentary insinuation.

Fleecer, without the smallest opposition, did as she was desired.

"And what were you going to say," inquired Honoria.

"Who—I ? Oh, I say nothing—ha ! ha ! ha ! ha ! but here's wishing you a good husband, Norey ! And who is it *wouldn't* make a good wife ? How *elegant* you used to do the honours of the table at the Cottage ! To be sure poor S. never invited me, except when you were quite by yourselves—though I couldn't blame him for that. Once more, a good husband to you !"

"How ridiculous you are !" said Honoria, smiling.

"I've heard of him often," said Mrs. Fleecer. "He's not over-handsome, to be sure ; but then he's monstrous rich, and, in this world, money makes the man."

"Who *are* you talking about ?" inquired Honoria.

"And extremely chatty and agreeable," continued the other, rattling on without heeding the question,

"and the sweetest opera-glass ! I couldn't but admire it ! Uncommon polite of him !"

"Oh, I perceive," said Honoria ; "'tis of him you are talking. Ha ! ha ! ha ! What a chandler-shop mind ! Told me the exact price he paid for the thing : 'Two-pound-five, bating two-and-threepence discount for ready money.' Ha ! ha ! ha !"

"Ha ! ha ! ha !—Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !" re-echoed Fleecer, while, unperceived by her companion, she filled her half-emptied glass with sherry. After a silence of two or three minutes, during which Mrs. Fleecer appeared to be getting drowsy (?), Honoria gravely said—

"By-the-bye, what could have put it into your head to tell the man that poor Tom left me ten thousand pounds ? I heard you, though I took no notice of it at the time."

"What ! I, dear ?" said Fleecer, speaking though with less rapidity, yet with no greater distinctness : "Oh, no, quite impos—possible.—Delishush negush !—Wouldn't ha' been true, dear, and I hate a lie as I hate—No, dear ; I said he *put you down in the will* for ten thous—ten thou—and so he did ; and when he did so, he had it to leave : 'twasn't your fault he lived nearly up to his inc—income. But he left you all he had—nearly two thous—two thousand, and blesh him for it—I say blesh him ! But I always like to put the best fa—I say, Nanny—Norey—I always like to put the best face upon things ; for who knows—I say, who knows—"

"Come, Fleecer, go to bed ; pray do."

"Ye—yesh, dear. But I know the world. When I looked at him, I saw with half an eye—Ha ! ha !—Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !—couldn't take his eye—his eyes off you. I say, I know th' world—Nobody knows th' world better than Bet—Betshy Fleeshier—so leave me to manage matters—I shay—I only shay, leave me to—"

Miss St. Egremont started up, and indignantly said—

“Heark’e, Fleecer : I think I understand you. That gentleman will no doubt make the returning of the umbrella a pretext for calling here to-morrow. I will not see him : you, I suppose, will. Now, mark me : should I discover that you implicate me in the remotest way with him, that instant I quit your house, and drop your acquaintance for ever. Come, light your candle, and go to bed.”

Saying this, she took her chamber-candle, which was on the table, and lit it. Mrs. Fleecer (still retaining her seat) took hers, and endeavoured to follow the example. But for some reason best known to itself, *her* candle rebelled against submitting to the operation : it would not touch the flame : it went above it and below it—beyond it and to either side of it ; but, no ; it would not consent to light.

“Ha ! ha ! ha !—Never saw s’h-a-can’lc—Norey, did you ever see s’h-a-can’le ? Ha ! ha ! ha ! How ve’y odd !—Shwe—shwetesht op’a-glassh—No, I’ll do nothing to ’splease you—I love you like my own child, and I say I’ll do—” Here the tears came into her eyes, and she grew pathetic.

“I’m ashamed of you !” said Honoria, taking the candle from her, and lighting it. “I never saw you so before, and trust I never shall again.”

“Grassh, dear,—that abo’nable grassh we took wi’ th’ shiken. Come, dear, we’ll go to bed—blessh you, I love you as if—”

Mrs. Fleecer quitted the room, and was followed by Honoria.

“Fleecer—Fleecer,” cried the latter, “why I declare you are going down to the kitchen !”

“Ha ! ha ! ha !—dear me ! how ve’y odd ! Only think—kisshen—going down to—ve’y odd—Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !—Norey, what was I going to shay ? O—Never shaw Kem’lc act La’y Macheath so well in a’

m' life—That 'bo'nable grassh to serve me so—I'll not pay a—beau'iful op'a-glassh—Well ; there—I'm going, my dear Nan—Norey—blesh you—good night, dear—Oh ! blesh you."

The ladies retired, each to her chamber, and there we must leave them—just stating that Honoria did what she never had done before (and why she did it now we must leave to conjecture) : having assured herself that her friend was in bed, and, by certain indications, asleep also, she went softly into her room, and put her candle out.

Now—

When a lady's in the case,
All other things must needs give place ;

and this necessity being multiplied by two, it becomes by so much the stronger. We therefore shall not return to our hero till we have said a few words in favour of our ladies, one, at least, of whom may have somewhat compromised herself in the opinion of those to whom we have introduced them. And, first, of the elder.

Mrs. Fleecer was, *in her way*, an excellent woman ; but by this qualification of our praise, nothing more serious is meant than that she was subject to most of those little infirmities which are inseparable from her calling. She was as honest as the day : a lodger might leave gold untold scattered about his apartments, and it would be as safe as if deposited under triple locks in the deepest vaults of the Bank ; *but* his tea-chest, his coal-scuttle, the unfinished decanter of wine on the sideboard, were never benefited by her visits in his absence. She would scorn to charge him in his weekly bills for commodities which had not been supplied to him ; *but* his daily pennyworth of milk occupied a modest space in his tiny jug, and his pound of butter melted away, as if, from Christmas to Christmas, the year were one entire and perfect canicule. She would

have cut off her own good right hand sooner than unlock his writing-case, or break the seal of a letter; *but*, should either be left open, there was no cogent lodging-house reason to restrain her from just taking a peep at their contents. These, however, were, as we have said, the infirmities of her calling—not her own.

But what shall we say concerning the little aberration which drew upon her the just rebuke of Miss St. Egremont? We hardly dare trust ourselves to dwell upon it. It was an accident; but even *as* an accident, of a character so—(we advisedly use the strongest term the language affords as applied to a woman in such a predicament)—UNFEMININE, that—

But Miss St. Egremont confessed that she had never seen her so before, and as we never have met with anybody else that had—

* * * * *

There, Mrs. Fleecer. But, a word in your ear. Delude not yourself with the notion that the accident was occasioned by the “grass.” We incline to attribute it to—a wing of the chicken.

We have seen that Fleecer would indulge in allusions to Miss St. Egremont’s former condition: this, however, was not done in a spirit of malice towards the latter, but rather as it was soothing to herself. For this occasional indulgence, *when they were by themselves*, served as a safety-valve to those natural feelings of envy in one woman towards another who has greatly distanced her in the race of life; and which, if closely pent, might have relieved themselves with mischievous effect on some occasion less seasonable than the present. For the rest, her regard for Honoria was sincere; and she would (to use her own comprehensive expression) have “stuck at nothing” to do her service.

Miss St. Egremont’s history has in part been told by her friend. Her mother kept a fruit-stall. Well? So did Pomona, whom poets have sung and painters have blazoned on their canvas. Her father was—he was a

private in the 1st Life Guards. Mars himself might have been proud to serve in that fine regiment, which then had a king for its colonel. Miss St. Egremont, when first Mrs. Fleecer became acquainted with her, could neither read nor write. What then? There was a period in the life of Madame de Sévigné when *she* could neither read nor write: so was it with Madame de Staël: so with Lady Morgan. Women do not come into the world reading and writing. The thing must have a beginning: it is, after all, a mere question of time; and if Honoria's education was deferred till a later period than is usual amongst ladies, the fault was not hers. She got it at last, and right well did she avail herself of it. Her *uncle* himself was a clever man, who, though not disinclined occasionally to fun and jollity, was fond of literature and the arts, and delighted in the society of men distinguished in those pursuits. These formed Slymore's *select* parties, to which the Cheshires and the Quiddys were never invited; and for these his niece evinced a decided preference; for, on such occasions the conversation was at once amusing and instructive, and marked by a tone of good breeding. Honoria was an apt and attentive listener; and her mind and manners (naturally not unrefined) were insensibly improved by such opportunities.

True, she saw little or no female society, for the reason, *perhaps*, that Slymore's friends had neither wives nor sisters to bring with them; but, as Horatio says, "'twere to consider too curiously to consider so." Upon the whole, however, Honoria, thrown into any society, would have "passed muster;" nor would it have been easy for any but a practised and searching eye to detect in the composition of Miss St. Egremont a particle of the alloy of Nanny Streggers.

How impressible is woman!—in the hands of man how ductile! What he would have her, that will she become. By his tastes and habits, his feelings, nay, his

very thoughts, are fashioned hers ; and if that drop of the angelic spirit which nature has infused into her bosom become polluted or debased, woe, woe to him, fool or villain, or both combined, for on his head rests the sin !

But we are straying from our narrative, whose straightforward, flowing course we have not yet interrupted by one single digression either to the right hand or to the left—excepting only when we could not help it—when, like Worcester's rebellion, it lay in our way and we found it.* So at once proceed we to our hero.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Our Hero resolves upon Marrying—Asks and obtains the Consent to that step of the Friend he loves best in the World—Curtain-cogitations not recommended—Hints and Warnings.

DURING the greater portion of the time between retiring to bed after his wet walk home and his usual hour of rising, Quiddy lay awake. He revolved in his mind the advantages of a marriage with Slymore's niece, could such an event be brought about. *She* is the woman for my money, thought he—or, more strictly considered, he was the man for hers. Her fortune was larger than any he had yet had the happiness of being introduced to in the whole circle of his acquaintance ; and even could he expect as much with the daughter of Mr. Deputy *This*, or somewhat more with the daughter of Mr. Alderman *That*, it might not be as good a thing in the long run. In these cases, as in most others of the kind, there were families tacked to the wife ; and

* "Rebellion lay in his way, and he found it."

Falstaff—*Henry IV.*—Part I.

in the wealthiest families it seldom happens that all its members are well provided for. With the utmost caution it is scarcely possible to escape a somebody who wants something, and who reasonably wonders where, in the name of goodness, he is to apply, if not to the fortunate individual who has "married into us!" Of nephews there are generally a few, and of cousins—the world is overrun with them!—and when you fondly console yourself with the belief that at length you have "done for" the last of them, "the cry is still they come." Then there may be a wife's youngest brother, for whom her papa, with his large family, cannot adequately provide, and "the world naturally looks to you, dear, to set poor Dick a-going, *considering what I brought you.*" Then, again, some fine morning, papa's "house" or brother Sam's "house" may be at the point of stopping payment for want of a few thousands to bolster it up; and then the question will be, "Who is the proper person to serve us, if not our son-in-law, or brother-in-law" (as the case may be), "who had all that money with Lizzy?" No; all things considered, Slymore's niece (and that such was Miss St. Egremont he could not be so uncivil as to doubt) was of all women the woman for him. She had no relative in any degree—no encumbrance save her ten thousand pounds, and that was a burden which he disinterestedly resolved to take upon his own shoulders. She was a fine woman too; of a steady, sensible age; educated and accomplished, and would be a credit to any man.

Having come to the conclusion that to espouse Miss St. Egremont would be a "good thing," Quiddy proceeded in the matter in a determined style. Without hesitation he asked his own consent to the marriage, and readily obtained it: nothing remained but to procure the lady's. Resolving to commence without delay operations to that end, he set off, at the earliest allowable visiting-hour, to Surrey-street, carrying under his arm the pretext for his call—the borrowed

umbrella—and in full confidence that his unintended present of the opera-glass to Mrs. Fleecer had secured for him the friendship of that lady.

“Well—I’ll not tell her it was a mistake and ask it back again, as I at first intended to do,” thought he: “it may turn to better account for me where it is.”

Meanwhile the ladies, at their breakfast, had talked over the occurrences of the preceding evening.

We have never heard the pleasures of a curtain-lecture highly extolled: the consequences of curtain-cogitations are certainly not more agreeable.

“Headache, indeed?” exclaimed Honoria, peevishly; “and who can wonder at it? I was thinking of it all night. There was first the porter, then the—”

“Well, well, dear, say no more about it,” said Fleecer; “it was very wrong; I’m sorry for it; it was an accident, and it never shall happen again.”

“And, then, how inconsiderate to lend that gentleman the umbrella! It was like giving him a hint to call again. What must *he* think of it? I thought of it twenty times in the night. I could hardly sleep for thinking of it.”

“But how *could* I do less when he asked for it?” said Fleecer.

“Well—perhaps. But at any rate there was no need for your telling him anything about my affairs. Such indiscretion! A stranger; a person *I* had never seen but once before, and *you* never at all. I declare I lay awake all night, tossing and tumbling about, and could not get it out of my mind.”

“Now, my dear,” said Fleecer, laughing, “that’s just the way with us. We go to bed with some little grievance hardly worth thinking about on one’s mind, and instead of going to sleep and forgetting it, there we lie, tossing and tumbling about, as you say, thinking it over and over till we have made a mountain of the molehill—bottle it up and cork it, ready for use (as the saying is), to be all poured out next morning upon

a poor unlucky devil just like me. Now if, in such cases, people would but go peaceably to sleep, they'd get up when morning came, and have forgotten all about the matter."

"Well, Fleecer, that's very true," said Honoria, recovering her good-humour; "and I believe that we should save ourselves a great deal of uncomfortable feeling, night and morning too, were we less apt to dwell upon equivocal words, or looks, or acts, till we had magnified them into slights or offences, and which turn out, after all, never to have had any meaning whatever. But tell me : what did you mean by saying, 'Leave me to manage?'"

"Leave me to manage!" exclaimed Fleecer; "I don't remember saying that."

"You said it, though. Now recollect yourself."

"Did I? Well—perhaps. But—Ha! ha! ha! don't ask me to remember anything that happened last night. Ha! ha! ha! Now, don't—there's a dear, good girl."

Honoria having reminded Mrs. Fleecer of other points bearing upon the question, the latter was, at length, enabled to reply—

"Oh—ay. Well, and would it *not* be a capital match for you?"

"Upon my word," said Honoria, laughing, "you are a most extraordinary person! And would not the young Duke of D——, who was in the stage-box last night, be a capital match for me? Shall I leave you to manage that? Yet you, like myself, know scarcely more of one of them than of the other."

"That's ridiculous," said Fleecer; "there's no compariety of reasoning in that."

"But you can't be speaking seriously; or, if you mean what you say, you are just fit for Bedlam. A man," continued Honoria, "who is all but a stranger to me, and whom, upon my slight acquaintance with him, I dislike exceedingly!"

"Dislike may wear off upon a longer acquaintance," said Fleecer; "I've seen that come to pass over and over again. As for him, if he is not smit with you, I'm a Dutchwoman. I saw it—saw it all—couldn't take his eyes off you. He'll call to-day, be sure of it; and I'll lay my life he'll corroborate what I say."

"I'm too much inclined to laugh at you to be angry," said Honoria; "for what you are saying is so amusingly absurd! Ha! ha! ha! A Mrs. Quiddy, *impromptu*! And what a name!—Quiddy! A woman would deserve a settlement of a thousand a-year only for submitting to it."

"Oh, hang the name!" continued the other, "you'd soon get used to that. Besides, as you have made up your mind to marry—and very properly, too—what could you do better than—Now, I know what you are going to say, but don't interrupt me; hear me out, my dear girl. What are you to do with your little property? Why, it would hardly produce you a hundred a-year. And who would that tempt to marry you? Some small tradesman, or at best, a butler tired of service. Quite beneath *you*, Norey—and after living like a lady, you never would be happy in such a situation. It would have been quite another thing when you lived with me as my—Now, don't interrupt me; while I'm about it, I'll have my say out: after that it will be your turn.—And here's a man so monstrous rich—I've heard of him often—so monstrous rich, that half the mothers in the City are squabbling to get him for their daughters. No, no; I know the world, dear: women with not half your pretensions have done quite as well for themselves as that; so if he should be inclined to look this way, don't you be such a fool as to make him look any other."

"Now, Fleecer, is it my turn to speak?" asked Miss St. Egremont, eagerly availing herself of the first pause in the chatter of her companion. Fleecer nodded assent, and the other proceeded—

"Well, then—(but don't suppose I am taking seriously any part of the nonsense you have been talking)—is it not likely that his admiration, which you pretend you have detected, had a great deal more to do with my fortune—thank *you* for that, Fleecer—than with me? Mind you—not that it signifies one way or another, for I look upon all you have been saying as mere foolishness."

"Why," replied Fleecer, reflecting a while, "if he were not so monstrous rich, one might suspect something of that sort; but in *his* case—! And yet one ought not to be too sure of anybody. If he has intentions, as I firmly believe he has, leave *that* point to me to discover; and should he, or any man, be so base, he would deserve to be married to you as a punishment—Don't start up and look so angry, my dear; you know what I mean—for the *disappointment* it would be to him."

"Well, I suppose he *will* call, as you have given him an excuse for it; but *I* shall not be at home to him. Indeed I *must* go out upon a little business. Only, mind—take care how you implicate me with him by any indiscreet talk—that's all."

So saying (in a warning tone), Miss St. Egremont left Mrs. Fleecer's room, in which they had breakfasted, and withdrew to her own apartment.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Quiddy's first visit to Surrey-street—Lodging-letting Ladies shown to be of the *genus Irritabile*—Quiddy makes an unlucky start, but recovers himself—He breaks ground, and is not dissatisfied with the Result of his Visit, *as far as it goes*.

Two o'clock came, and with it (as was announced to her mistress by Betty), "The gentleman as 'as brought home the humbereller, mum." The "parlour" not

being at home, the gentleman was shown into that apartment.

Whilst waiting the arrival of Mrs. Fleecer, Quiddy had an opportunity of examining the room. This room being the front-parlour, it were superfluous to say that it was on the ground-floor, and that it possessed the advantage of commanding from its two windows an uninterrupted view of the houses which were immediately opposite to it ; nor (owing to the fortunate narrowness of the street) was this view seriously impeded, even upon the present occasion, when there happened to be a fog which might have been fatal to the enjoyment of a more extensive prospect. On one side of the room was a sofa, which, like the six chairs (of which two presented the luxury of arms), was not only covered, but *stuffed*, with horsehair. Of this latter fact the evidence was, perhaps, needlessly ostentatious, for the material protruded itself from many places, more particularly at the edges. Opposite the sofa stood a small sideboard, conveniently supplied with drawers, and ornamented with brass handles. On it was a brown tea-urn, supported on each side by an open, empty knife-case. In front of the urn was a tea-chest, and in front of that a decanter, around which were placed, with no unsuccessful attempt at symmetry, six wine-glasses and two tumblers, of various sizes and patterns. A red-leathern cruet-stand and two glass salt-cellars completed this display of ornament and utility combined. Above all was a small concave mirror, of about a foot in diameter, to whose frame (still exhibiting signs of its having once been gilt) was attached a pair of sconces.

The fireplace stood diagonally in a corner of the room. The mantelpiece was decorated with little figures (executed in earthenware) of a white shepherd and a shepherdess, each in an interesting attitude, lolling beneath a whity-brown tree ; a pink Newfoundland dog ; a yellow parrot ; a scarlet elephant (all of

the same size), and a vase containing a few bunches of sooty, smoke-dried lavender. A sliding toasting-fork, a japanned hearth-broom, a worsted-worked kettle-holder, and a couple of *papier maché* card-racks, also assisted to adorn this important portion of the apartment. Above the mantelpiece was exhibited a portrait (evidently the work of some Sir Joshua of that school which professes to "do" likenesses "in this style for only two guineas") of a goggle-eyed, red-faced lady, in a scarlet velvet dress with yellow satin trimmings; a green satin turban, with a gold band and a plume of sky-blue feathers; and round her neck a huge gold chain, to which was suspended a miniature portrait of a man in a military uniform. The portrait (that is to say, the lady's) was, as it afterwards appeared, a representation of Mrs. Fleecer herself, done in days gone by. In the middle of the apartment stood a small rickety table, covered with a piece of dingy green baize, upon which lay a brownish black-leathern writing-case, and an ink-glass with one pen in it. To complete the description of this room, it is only necessary to say, that the carpet was pieced, in many places, with as close a regard to its original pattern as circumstances would allow; and that the blackish-gray stuff curtains might have boasted of having once been of a bright blue, had they not been of an age to protect them against indulging in the little vanities of this world.

Presently Mrs. Fleecer made her appearance.

After a few words on both sides, naturally arising out of the situation, and thanks from Mrs. Fleecer to Quiddy for his "elegant present," which she somewhat needlessly assured him she would "keep as long as she lived," the gentleman expressed a hope that the *young* lady also was well, and that he might be allowed the pleasure of seeing her; in reply to which he was informed, and truly, that the *young* lady was not at home, and that the time of her return was uncertain. This was unfortunate for Quiddy; for, depending upon

seeing Miss St. Egremont, he had arranged in his own mind (as we have seen him do upon a former occasion) what *he* should say—planning a line of conversation upon the assumption that every word said by the lady would fit in exactly with it. Disappointed in this, but resolving at once to commence operations by hinting to the young lady's friend at the subject so near his heart (pocket?), he approached it adroitly, as he thought, and by what he considered to be an unimportant observation or two. But he was unluckily mistaken upon both points, for they led him to the very brink of converting the lady's friend into his foe—a result which would have been fatal to his hopes.

Now, it is an extraordinary fact that in all London (and London is a tolerably extensive place), there is nowhere to be found such a thing as an undesirable lodging—a lodging too large, or too small; too light, or too dark; too dismal, or too gay; too much exposed to the air, or too confined; too far distant from any place whatsoever, or too near to it. In a word, no one ever looked at a lodging but was assured by the authority the most competent to decide—namely, the lodging-letter—that that one was in every respect, without a single drawback or objection, the very lodging for their purpose, and that it was scarcely in the nature of things that it should be otherwise. Say that authors, artists, actors, musicians, are the *genus irritabile*!—a lodginghouse-keeper against the field. If you doubt us, *try*. Visit the smallest and dingiest lodginghouse in the dullest part of the town: listen to the eloquent praises of its locality, size, and airiness—its conveniences, accommodations, and elegances: admit all this, yet venture to hint that, after all, it is not absolutely a Chatsworth or a Blenheim—and we wish you safely out of it.

Upon this rock it was that the hopes of Quiddy were nearly wrecked.

“And so, marm,” said Quiddy, “Miss St. Egremont has left the cottage for good and all?”

“Yes, poor thing, she has!” replied Mrs. Fleecer, with a sigh.

“It was a sweet pretty place; an uncommon pleasant situation,” continued he.

“It was indeed, sir, a charming place; quite a paradise!” responded the other.

“Ahem!—she must find the change to this place uncommon dull, marm!” continued the unlucky Quiddy, turning his eyes towards the windows.

“Dull, sir! Dull!” exclaimed Mrs. Fleecer, in a tone compounded of astonishment and anger. “I don’t quite understand you, sir.”

“I mean, marm,” said Quiddy, “that after coming from Lisson Grove, this street must seem rather dismalish.”

“Surrey-street dull! Surrey-street dismal!” continued Mrs. Fleecer. “Why, sir, it is notorious to be one of the gayest streets in London—indeed, some people complain that it is too gay. *Dull!*—upon my word! Why, there’s always something a-going on in it. Dull! Why, even at this very moment—listen—now I *beg* you’ll listen, sir.”

Quiddy *did* listen, and he was rewarded for his obedience by hearing, all at the same time, the sound of the Old Hundredth Psalm struggling through the fog from a barrel-organ at a little distance down the street; a hoarse voice crying “rabbit-skins;” and the grating of a knife-grinder’s wheel immediately beneath the windows.

“Um! and you call this DULL!” continued Mrs. Fleecer, with a toss of the head, and a strong emphasis on the last word.

Quiddy began to perceive that he had committed a mistake, and, with his own peculiar address, set about repairing it.

"Why, marm, when I said dull, I didn't positively mean—what I mean is, considering what an uncommon airy place Lisson Gro—"

"*Well, sir?*" interposed the lady, in a manner that utterly confounded him.

"Y—yes, marm, I—in course I don't know how you may be *behind*, but—but—looking to the front, marm—"

"The front, sir! Not airy! Do you mean to disparage my lodgings, sir? To say nothing of my *drawing-room*, sir, here in this very parlour I have had tip-top quality lodging.—Not airy, indeed! Why, sir, I have had officers, and ladies of fashion, and Member of Parliaments in my front, and they never complained it wasn't airy enough. *And* close to the water, too! Why, sir, the Thames is positively *contagious* to us—within a stone's throw, I may say. Not airy, indeed! I think if a lady like Miss S." (continued Mrs. Fleecer, with increasing indignation), "a lady like her, with *her* fortune, who might choose where she likes, is satisfied with the situation—I *must* say, I *do* think—"

"I'm sure, my dear good madam," hastily said Quiddy, who felt the danger of his position, "I'm sure if I have said anything to offend you, I am ready and willing to apologize."

"Oh, dear," said Mrs. Fleecer, soothed by his air of contrition; "I'm certain you didn't *mean* to be personal; but to say that my street is dull, and that—Oh, I'm certain you are too much of a gentleman to hurt any woman's feelings."

"Gentleman? *In* course I am, marm," said Quiddy; "it is very well known how I stand in the world." Here he tapped his breeches-pocket, and continued: "And what place *can* look lively such a day as this? I dare say that on a fine clear day the house is altogether another thing, and that even the furniture looks quite—"

Luckily for the maladroit speaker, the concluding words were not distinctly heard by Mrs. Fleecer, who replied—

“Oh, quite, quite, sir. Indeed, everybody has done me justice to say—and I have had some of the very tip-top folks lodging with me—that mine is not at all like a common lodging-house. They would not have come to me if it had been; for it is natural that personages who are used to their little comforts and elegances at home, should look for them abroad. There was the Honourable Mrs. McBawbie and her daughter, who came up from Scotland for the Queen’s Birthday Drawing-room the very last season, and went to court in their court-dresses out of these very parlours. Then, after them, there was the Reverend Mr. Grimbush, who was a clergyman, and *he*—”

And here, observing that Quiddy’s eyes were fixed on the portrait over the mantelpiece, she shook her head, looked down upon the patched carpet, and with a simper and a sigh, said—

“Ah! sir, such was I once!”

“No! was you *indeed*, marm?” said Quiddy. “How very beautiful”—(Mrs. Fleecer covered her face with her handkerchief)—“how very beautiful the velvet and satin is done! And the gentleman in the miniature—who may he be?”

“My poor dear F., the late captain,” replied the lady, in a melancholy tone.

“Dead, marm?” inquired Quiddy.

“He was killed three years ago, sir,” was the reply.

“The fortune of war, marm,” observed the other.

“True, sir, true; but that is poor consolation to a lone widow. Ah! poor dear fellow! He went out with his corps—the Bermondsey Volunteers—to be reviewed on Wormwood Scrubs, got his feet wet, and died of cramp in his stomach the same night.”

“Cramp in the stomach—ah!—*A propos*, marm, you said it is uncertain when Miss St. Egremont will return?”

Now, as the *à propos* is not quite obvious, one might imagine that the speaker was ignorant of the meaning of the word he employed—a case not unfrequent with some who incline to be ostentatious in the display of their verbal wealth. Since, however, we are not critics to cavil at what the erudite Lord Duberly would call Quiddy's "cacalology," nor metaphysicians to trace the links in the chain of ideas which in the mind of the latter connected the return of Miss St. Egremont with the late Captain Fleecer's cramp in the stomach, but merely recorders of facts and events and conversation such as we find them—we must state that, *à propos* or otherwise, the question drew from the lady this reply:—

"Yes, sir, quite—that's to say, it is uncertain whether she will be home much before dinner-time; but as we are going to-night to Drury-L—"

Here Mrs. Fleecer was suddenly attacked by a fit of coughing, which caused the *where* they were going to be left unexplained. Or might it have occurred to her that for Honoria, under her "present circumstances," to go on two successive nights to the theatre, might seem "odd" to the gentleman?

"Charming creature is that Miss S., marm."

"Ah! Mr. Q., it is only those who know her as well as I do that *can* know what a treasure she is."

"Talking of treasure, Mrs. F.," said Quiddy—and in this case the association of ideas in his mind was less obscure than in the former one—"talking of treasure, I was delighted—that's to say, for *her* sake—at what you told me last night."

"Told you? I don't recollect—treasure—told you?" said Mrs. Fleecer, pretending forgetfulness. And then, as if suddenly recollecting herself, she exclaimed, "Treasure!—Oh—well, it is indeed a treasure—the charmingest opera-glass I ever saw. I'm sure I shall value it as long as I live; not so much for the thing itself, beautiful as it is, as for your manner of present-

ing it—so very disinterested—merely because you saw it took my fancy, as I freely own it did. As I said to Miss S., so *much* like the gentleman—so *very* elegant, quite the Don Quixote of politeness.”

There was nothing in the world (money-getting excepted) by which our hero was so much pleased as by compliments paid to his politeness and gentility; accordingly he acknowledged each one by an “Oh! marm!” accompanied with one of his chin-dropping bows. And that Mrs. Fleecer should have eulogized those qualities in him to Miss St. Egremont, with whom it was essential to his project that he should stand well, was (to express it in the form in which the matter was passing through his mind) more than a set-off on the profit side of the account which, up to this moment, had stood debited with the sum of 2*l.* 2*s.* 9*d.*, the exact cost of the unintended present. At once to confirm the lady’s good opinion of his politeness and gentility, he said, in an off-hand kind of style—

“Oh, my dear good madam, I beg you wont mention it. The thing is no object to me, not even if it had cost twice two-two-nine. It was sufficient that *you* admired it, and—”

And Mr. Quiddy hastily buttoned his waistcoat close up to the throat; for at this moment the lady’s eye rested on a large diamond-pin of considerable value, which, as an evidence of wealth, the vulgarian wore in his flowing shirt-frill, at all times and in all places, even from the hour of his rising.

The exact concurrence of the lady’s marked notice of the sparkling ornament with the gentleman’s utterance of his last few words, might have been merely accidental. Whether or no, it is certain his extraordinary movement did not pass unobserved by her, for she mentally ejaculated—

“Well, I declare! What a nasty, suspicious-minded person he must be!”

This trifling incident (which was not soon forgotten

by Mrs. Fleecer), connected with two or three circumstances of apparently no greater importance which occurred upon subsequent occasions, materially influenced the future conduct of the lady in matters concerning the "great what-do-they-call-it of Mark-lane."

The train of the conversation having been broken, Phineas knew not well how to resume it, so as to lead Mrs. Fleecer imperceptibly back to what was with him the main point—Honoraria and her fortune. He looked blank, twiddled his thumbs, and (as it was usual with him in such straits) emitted, in something between whistling and singing (for it was not exactly either the one thing or the other), a snatch of an old tune.

Now, it is an axiom which we believe no philosopher has ever yet ventured to dispute, that, in order to bring an affair to a conclusion, it is necessary in the first place to begin it. If you have the tact to begin at precisely the right point, your success may be the greater; if not, begin where you may, and, for the result, trust to the chapter of accidents. Begin, however, you must. In this latter predicament stood Quiddy. Having been frustrated in his original intention of leading to the great point by a delicate chain of seemingly unimportant observations and questions (though we consider his ability to execute so nice a movement as more than doubtful), he made a dash forward, and after a preparatory "*too-tum-too, ti-tum-ti,*" said—

"I say, Mrs. Fleecer, my dear good madam—I say—I suppose Miss St. Egremont, being now quite alone in the world, as it were, will soon be thinking of leading some happy man or other to the hynemeal altar, as they call it?"

"I know nothing of that lady's intentions, sir," replied the other, with an air of reserve. "She is very close. Indeed she would be *morally* offended if I were to pry into them in the least. *But,*" added she, with a significant bending of the head, "my notion is

she will settle quietly for the rest of her days in Devonshire or Wales, where she may live like a lady." And she fixed her eyes scrutinizingly upon Quiddy.

"Wales! Devonshire! Live like a lady!" exclaimed he. "Wonder if she couldn't, with such means! But it would be folly, madness—at her age, and such a charming *gal*! She ought to marry. Who wouldn't be proud to—Why, marm, with her five hundred a-year she might—"

"Her *what*, sir?" innocently inquired Mrs. Fleecer.

"Why, marm, ten thousand pounds, even in the funds, at the present prices, would produce that; but there are ways and means by which—"

"Oh, dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Fleecer, in apparent alarm; "I perceive—what I hinted last night. Oh, sir; for Heaven's sake not a word of that! If Miss St. Egremont had the faintest notion that I had been so indiscreet as to let out to you that she—Oh, sir, it would ruin me with her for ever!"

This is what Mrs. Fleecer *said*; what she *thought* was—"So, so, Mr. Q.; I see through you as clear as a pane of glass."

Quiddy was in the midst of a protestation that he was "as close as wax," and that for any further revelations which then, or at any future time, she might be inclined to make to him she might rely on his secrecy and discretion, when a hackney-coach drew up to the door. Miss St. Egremont alighted from it, entered the house, and walked directly up to her apartment. In another moment the landlady was summoned by the little maid-of-all-work to attend upon her lodger.

"I must now leave you, sir," said Mrs. Fleecer.

"But, marm—my dear good madam," eagerly said Quiddy, "can't I see her at once?—can't I pay my *devours* to her now?"

"Impossible," replied she; "it is quite out of the question. In her present state she does not see a soul."

"But to-morrow—or next day, then?"

"I cannot be so bold as to answer for *her* at all," said Mrs. Fleecer; "*but*, Mr. Q., you have been so *very* polite to *me* that *I* shall be happy to see you at all times."

Pleased with this invitation, of which he resolved speedily to avail himself, and satisfied with the result of the interview, *as far as it went*, the gentleman departed, whilst the lady hastened to join her fair drawing-room lodger.

CHAPTER XXV.

A Conversation between Miss St. Egremont and Mrs. Fleecer concerning our Hero, and other matters of at least equal Interest to the younger Lady.

ON entering the room, Mrs. Fleecer found Honoria in the double act of throwing herself upon the sofa, and violently casting her bonnet away from her down upon the floor.

"Why, Norey dear!" exclaimed the former, "what is the matter with you? What has put you out of temper?"

"Out of temper, *indeed*—and not without good cause," replied Honoria.

"Why, my dear," said the other, "I couldn't prevent Mr. Quiddy's calling; but as I wouldn't allow him to see you, why—"

"Hang Mr. Quiddy," said Honoria, pettishly: "he has nothing to do with it. Don't talk to me of the horrid scrub."

Had the late Nanny Streggers used such an expression, Mrs. Fleecer would not perhaps have been so greatly astonished at it; but, proceeding from the present Miss Honoria St. Egremont, it (to repeat her

own words) "struck her all of a heap." True is the adage, as we last night witnessed, that "in wine there is truth:" the same thing may be said of violent excitement of any kind, temper particularly included. Now, as ladies seldom pay a sly visit to a corner cupboard, mischief cannot frequently be apprehended from such a circumstance; but since they all carry their tempers about with them, it were advisable that they should keep them as much as possible under control, lest, at some unlucky moment, passion betray them into the exposure of a *something* or *other* which it may have cost them years of study or of self-restraint to subdue or to conceal. We do not think it necessary to address these observations to gentlemen, because they, bless them! angels as they are, never allow temper to acquire the mastery over them.

"Why, Norey!" exclaimed Mrs. Fleecer, "I'm struck all of a heap. When did I ever hear you use such a word?"

"Oh, don't tease me," continued Honoria, in the same mood: "it is enough to put an angel out of temper."

"But tell me—what?" anxiously inquired the other.

"Why, I have been into the City to see Harry Scott, poor Slymore's executor; and instead of the legacy to me being two thousand pounds, it turns out to be only two thousand in the *Three-per-Cents*."

"Well, well," innocently observed Mrs. Fleecer, "so long as it is *somewhere*, it doesn't much signify where it is."

"How stupid you are!" exclaimed Miss St. Egremont; "it makes a difference of eight hundred pounds to me; and Scott tells me, if I sell it *now*, that, after paying legacy-duty; and Lord knows what besides, it will barely produce me twelve hundred. And what am I to do with that, I should like to know?"

"Let it remain where it is, and endeavour to live on the interest," said Mrs. Fleecer,

"Very good advice, indeed," said Honoria, ironically ; "how am I to live upon sixty pounds a-year?"

"Why, then, my dear, why not sink it in an annuity? You have no one to care about but yourself."

"I thought of that," replied Honoria, "and called at an Annuity-office: but even that I find will not produce me much more, although I underwent the mortification of telling the people there, when they inquired my age, that I was forty."

"But why do that?" inquired Fleecer. "When I went to insure my life some time ago, I made myself out to be a good ten years younger than I was."

"Of course you did," said Honoria; "but that was altogether a different case: in yours, one would have the more to pay in proportion as one is older; in mine, to receive."

"Right—dear, right," said Mrs. Fleecer; "I recollect *now*—that *was* my reason for it. Then what *do* you mean to do?"

"Really, Fleecer, I don't know," replied the other lady, her irritation gradually subsiding. "It is a very perplexing matter. I might manage perhaps to get on tolerably well in some quiet country place; but, Heavens! I should mope to death in a month. As to living in London, after the style I have been accustomed to—impossible!"

"*Quite* impossible—that's to say, if you had nothing to hope for beyond what you have got," said Fleecer. She paused for a moment, and then, with an air of extreme simplicity, continued—"By-the-bye, Norey, did I tell you Mr. Quiddy has just looked in?"

"Yes, you did," replied Norey.

At the same time she rose, and, with her hands in her pocket-holes—(for at that time ladies wore, not a couple of tiny bags stitched to the front of an apron for the sole reception and repose of their forefingers, but unmistakeable pockets slung at their sides)—with her hands in her pocket-holes, she musingly paced up

and down the room. Mrs. Fleecer placed herself in a chair, and, with her hands in her pockets, and after another pause, which she filled up by jingling together the bunch of keys, and scissors, and halfpence, and nutmeg-grater and other articles, which we have upon a former occasion mentioned as the usual occupants of those depositories, she said—

“Do you know, we have had a *very* pleasant gossip together,—perfectly *tolerable*, I assure you.”

“I wish you joy of it,” said Honoria, carelessly.

“Do you know, now—really—he is not so *very* disagreeable, after all, isn’t that Mr. Quiddy?”

Miss St. Egremont made no reply, and Mrs. Fleecer continued—

“Rely on it—ha! ha! ha!—rely on it, what I told you this morning is true. I saw it, as I said, with half an eye!—he’s smit, positively smit with you.”

“Really, really,” said Honoria, “this is no time to entertain me with your nonsensical talk about that man. I have something more serious to think of.”

“Well, well—don’t be so snappish—I only spoke. I’m sure what I said I meant for your good,” said Fleecer.

“*My* good!” exclaimed Miss St. Egremont, suddenly standing still. “Once more, recollect the warning I gave you but a few hours ago; and if——But it is clear to me that I have been the subject of conversation between you, and I shall be glad to know—I insist upon knowing—what has passed.”

“Why, to tell you the truth,” said Mrs. Fleecer, “he began by saying such insulting things that I was almost ready to turn him out of the house.”

Honoria turned pale—or we ought rather to say she *felt* she did; for there was a certain slight impediment which would hardly have permitted one to discover that phenomenon—and falteringly said—

“Insulting! This comes of your intolerable gossip. Did he allude to—did he—what did he say of me?”

"Of you? Lord, dear, nothing but the most complimenting things. It was to *me*. What do you think? He had the personality to say that my situation was dull, that my house was dismal, that my parlour was dark, that my front wasn't airy, that my—"

"Psha! Ridiculous!" exclaimed Honoria, "was that all?"

"All!" cried the sensitive lodging-letter, starting from her chair, and rattling the contents of her pockets with increased activity. "Disparage my house, and call it *all*! Um—upon my word, Miss *Nanny*!—people can feel for their own characters, it seems, but where a friend's is insulted—"

"Come, my dear Fleecer," said Honoria, soothingly, "no offence was intended to you personally; and since—"

"Not *personal*, Norey?" said the other, at once touched by the kindness of her friend's manner: "ah! my dear girl, it is only one who gets her living by her house that can enter into the delicacy of a woman's feelings. However, he *did* apologize, and very much like a gentleman, too, that I must say for him. But as you don't like the subject, we'll not talk any more about him."

"Pray, never mind me," said Honoria: "the subject appears to be a very agreeable one with you, so go on, if you please." And with affected indifference she added, "And what was it he said so very complimentary to me?"

"First of all he remarked what a charming creature you were; next he said—"

"There, that's quite enough," said Honoria, accidentally walking towards the looking-glass; "don't repeat any more of the man's nonsense to me.—Fleecer," continued she, with a simper, "and—and what sort of looking creature is he by daylight?"

"Why, really, now, he is not so bad, by any means; and with a diamond pin in his frill worth a hundred

guineas if a shilling. But don't let us talk any more about *him*," said Mrs. Fleecer in her turn. "But now, dear, about your own matters : what *do* you mean to do with that trifle of money of yours ? for a trifle it is—considering that it is all you have to live upon. I shouldn't advise you to take a lodging-house—I know the plagues of that ; but I really do think " (which is what she really did not think) "that if you were to set up in some small way of business—"

"Ay," said Miss St. Egremont, with an expression of disgust (which was precisely what Fleecer intended to provoke), "ay ; sit behind a counter and serve out pennyworths of gingerbread and sugar-candy ; or measure tapes and bobbins. If that is the best advice you have to offer, why—"

"Why, my dear," said Fleecer, "it wouldn't be pleasant, I own ; but what is a poor unmarried woman with a poor paltry income to do ? Or—what say you to a school for little children ? With your *talons*, Norey—"

"Well," replied the other, "I have more than once thought of that. It is a lady-like occupation, at any rate ; and with the assistance of some of poor Tom's City friends, who might recommend—"

"Excellent," said Fleecer ; "the very thing for you. Miss Honoria St. Egremont, in a prim, frumpish dress, walking about Hammersmith or Dulwich at the heels of a score of little darlings, with a camp-chair in her hand. I think I see you ! As to poor Tom's City friends, as you call them, that was all very well when poor Tom was alive, and the champagne and claret were flying about ; but you'll find it a different thing now, take my word for that."

"Well, I am inclined to think better of them—of some of them, at least—Harry Scott, for instance. {This very morning he spoke to me like a brother, and told me that if I chose to let him have my money to employ it for me till I knew what better to do with it, he

could allow me a great deal more than I can get for it where it is."

"Ha! and some fine morning—smash: and then where will you be?" said Mrs. Fleecer.

"What! Whobble and Scott, the great bill-brokers! Ridiculous!" exclaimed Honoria.

"No, no, my dear girl," said Mrs. Fleecer; "a good rich husband is the thing for you; and if you were not so monstrous nice and so proud—"

But here the conversation was interrupted by the little maid, who came with the information that dinner was quite ready.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Quiddy goes to dine with Sir Gog and Lady Cheshire—Their Conversation concerning him previous to his Arrival—Her Ladyship, in her way, as attentive to the Main Chance as her Guest.

WE have already intimated that Mr. Phineas was not altogether dissatisfied with the result of his morning's chief occupation. True, he had not been so fortunate as to obtain an interview with the fair object of his visit, but he had succeeded to a certain degree in establishing a good understanding with a person who professed to be her sincere friend, and who probably possessed some influence with her. What should be his next proceeding he could not immediately determine. His former attempts in the art of love-making, in the instances of the late worthy widow Sanderson and poor Janet Gray, had been signal failures both; and though up to the present moment he never could clearly understand why such should have been the case, he nevertheless had some misgivings that it required a different, if not a more delicate mode of handling than that which he always considered and treated not only as its sister-art, but (since he invariably

allowed it precedence) its elder and better sister—the art of money-making—in which he was an adept.

But he postponed the consideration of this difficult question till a more fitting opportunity, as he was now bustling through the crowded streets home to Mark-lane to dress, or, as he usually described that operation, to “clean himself,” for dinner at Sir Gog and Lady Cheshire’s, with whom he was engaged in Finsbury-square at five precisely.

It will be recollected it was at Sir Gog Cheshire’s (“formerly the eminent cheesemonger in Bishops-gate-street”) that Quiddy became acquainted with Miss St. Egremont’s uncle, Slymore. He therefore considered this engagement at the present juncture as a fortunate occurrence, not doubting that in the course of conversation something would be said about Sir Gog’s late friend, from which he (Mr. Quiddy) might derive useful information.

The family of the Cheshires was of “Class No. 2” (which we have already noticed), where the fathers having but “little” to bestow upon their unmarried daughters, Quiddy was invited “often.” Now, Sir Gog, though a kind father and wealthy, was not so much of a King Lear as even to think of giving all to his daughters, and this for two sufficient reasons: first, because having been the architect of his own fortune, he thought himself entitled in his retirement to the enjoyment of a good share of it; and secondly, because he had five sons also to put forward in the world. Of the latter, three were already well established in business; while two (the youngest), of the respective ages of seventeen and fifteen, were still at home, waiting to be suitably “done for.” There were five daughters also. Two of these (having each received her portion of fifteen hundred pounds) were already married to respectable men in good business: there consequently remained three, all of a marriageable age, for whom husbands had yet to be provided.

But was it likely that Mr. Quiddy would, in his own person, accommodate either of the young expectants? Not in the least. The *potion* (as he called it) which the father would give, was hardly worth having if a wife was to be taken along with it; and then, should he take the money, although with its encumbrance, he might still be expected to do something for one of those boys. Again, he did not much like either of the "gals," though that circumstance would have gone for nothing had the main article been satisfactory to him. Notwithstanding all this, he never hesitated to accept their dinner invitations, which (as from four or five other families similarly circumstanced) had been for many months past as frequent as once in a week at least: nor, though he well knew (as he could not but know) the motives which dictated them, did his delicacy ever take the liberty to advise him to reject that which tended so greatly to his pleasure and convenience.

But, agreeable as this might be to our gentleman, his state of neutrality did not suit the purpose of the mammas. It was high time to understand what were Mr. Quiddy's intentions; and in the case of the Cheshires it had been resolved to come to that understanding upon the present occasion.

"Things mustn't go on in this way much longer, Cheshire," said her ladyship to Sir Gog. "Jane will be twenty-six on the 13th of February, Eliza has turned twenty-two, and even Clara is nineteen. Mr. Quiddy ought to know himself well enough to be aware that it cannot be for the mere pleasure of such company as his we are so very attentive to him, and I am resolved to put the question to him this very afternoon."

"Right, my dear—quite right," replied the knight; "anything is better than shilly-shallying—in short—d—d shilly-shallying."

"Shilly-shallying? Fiddlesticks!" said the lady;

“there has not yet been even as good as that—not a word nor a hint.”

“Then you can’t say whether he has a preference?” inquired Sir Gog.

“It would be hard to tell ; but, if for any, *I* should say Clara,” replied Lady Cheshire.

“Clara ! what ! my darling Clara ?” exclaimed he : “my pet, the flower of the flock ? I’m sorry for that. They are all good girls, bless ’em ! but she is *too* good for him. She’s so amiable, so gentle, so——Bless her pretty pale face ! I’m very sorry—in short, I’m d—d very sorry for it, my lady.”

“But,” continued her ladyship ; “*she* can’t endure him ; and I verily believe no power on earth would force her to have him were he made all of gold.”

“Indeed ! Now for that I’m glad—in short, I’m d—d glad. As to forcing her, and breaking her poor little heart, we won’t do that—no—in short, we’ll be d—d if we do, my lady.”

“What are Eliza’s feelings concerning him, I can’t exactly say,” said Lady Cheshire, not heeding her husband’s customary little expletive ; “I don’t think she cares much about him one way or the other ; but if he should propose for *her*, I do think she would make but little difficulty about accepting him.”

“So think I : very little difficulty : in short, d—d very little, my dear. And as to Jane?”—

“Why, Jane, I think, *rather* likes him—that is to say, enough for the purpose ; but then *she* is six-and-twenty, and a sensible girl.”

“Come now, Susan, my dear,” said Sir Gog, laughing ; “tell me candidly—in short, d—d candidly, how should *you* like him for a husband ?”

“Don’t make such an old fool of yourself, my dear Gog, as to ask *me* such a question,” said my lady, laughing with him. “How should *I* like him, indeed ! I, who am forty upwards.”

“*Forty* upwards !” exclaimed the knight ; “forty

upwards, *indeed!*—in short, d—d upwards, my lady. Why, our Dick is thirty-two.”

Here the conversation was interrupted by a knock at the street-door. This announced the arrival of our hero; but some minutes elapsed ere he made his appearance in the drawing-room; for (to save a shilling), having walked through a smart shower of rain, he had (after depositing his hat and streaming umbrella) to take off the splashed Hessian boots which he wore over his black-net tights, and replace them by a pair of shoes which he brought with him in his pocket. This done, he drew on a pair of reddish-yellow Woodstock gloves (for he had walked bare-handed through the streets), from which, as he thrust his fingers into them, flew a cloud of powder, the material with which they had, for the fourth time, been renovated. While this process was being performed, the young ladies and the two younger sons joined mamma and papa in the drawing-room.

Quiddy was received at the drawing-room door by Lady Cheshire and her eldest daughter Jane, whom she dragged along with her by the arm. The gentleman dropped his chin to each, and, with solemn politeness, said—

“How d’ye do, my lady? hope you feel yourself tolerably well to-day, my lady?—How do *you* do, miss? hope *you* feel yourself tolerable well to-day?” Each of the other daughters he addressed in the same words. To the boys it was merely, “How do *you* do, Master Bill?—How do *you* do, Master Harry?” While to Sir Gog he said, “And how are *you*, Sir G.?” accompanying the inquiry with a slap of his outspread hand on the knight’s back, which left on his bright-green coat a very fine impression of the speaker’s dusty glove.

“Q.,” said Sir Gog, good-humouredly, “you are rather late. You know our five means five, and it is nearly a quarter-past. Our cook is punctual: she prides

herself on doing everything to a turn ; and if the fish should be overdone, she'll wish you where you would find yourself rather the reverse of comfortable—in short, d—d the reverse.”

“Come, Sir G.,” said Quiddy (clapping his huge hands one on each of Sir Gog’s shoulders)—“come, I flatter myself you can’t often strike a balance against me on that account. P. Q., as I’m sometimes called for short, is generally in pudd’n time—eh, ladies?”

When he turned away from his host to make this playful appeal, the girls tittered and the boys burst into a loud laugh.

“I say, papa,” cried Harry (the younger of the boys), “do but look in the glass! Mr. Quiddy has given you such a beautiful pair of shoulder-knots with the stuff they clean dirty gloves with.”

Papa did as he was desired to do, and with his pocket-handkerchief rubbed from his shoulders the marks which his guest had imprinted on them, and which very much resembled what Master Harry had compared them to. While doing this, he cautioned Master Harry to behave himself if he wished to be allowed to dine in the parlour. At the same time Lady Cheshire uttered an admonitory “Girls!” to her daughters, whose renewed titter at their brother’s allusion to Mr. Quiddy’s gloves she feared might be taken offensively by that gentleman.

But Quiddy being in one of his very best humours, pretended to join in the laugh, though he suspected it to be against him ; while, with his hands behind him, he drew off their offending coverings and put them into his pocket.

“Come, Mr. Quiddy,” said her ladyship, abruptly, and in the same breath with the admonitory monosyllable ; “come, have you anything new to tell us?”

“Why, my lady, nothing very particular. Oh—yes—there is expected to be a great demand for slops for the navy—sailors’ trousers, and that sort of thing, you

know ; and I'm not sorry for it, as I happen to have a large stock by me ; and as—"

"But," said her ladyship, interrupting him, "I mean anything going on in the world?"

"Oh—ay—oh—why, I was at the play last night ; and who do *you* think, Sir Gog, I happened to meet there?"

But ere Sir Gog could reply, dinner was announced.

"Give your arm to her ladyship, Q.," said Sir Gog.

"Oh, never mind me," said Lady Cheshire, laughing ; "I'm an old woman. Take one of the girls, Mr. Quidy : come, give your arm to your *favourite*."

While Quidy, somewhat perplexed by this command, and rubbing his ear with his finger, was endeavouring to hit upon something pretty to say ; and Clara, absconding to one of the windows, was stooping to look for a something which she had neither lost nor mislaid, her ladyship just said—

"Now, Jane, my love."

Hereupon the "great what-do-they-call-it" awkwardly held out his arm to that young lady.

"Now," said the good mamma to the pair, "do you young people lead the way."

And the party descended to the dining-room.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Our Hero's Behaviour in *High Society* : his Pleasantry and Conviviality—"Little pitchers," &c.—A Marriage-trap is set for him—His Conduct under the Circumstances, and its Consequences.

QUIDDY took his seat next to Lady Cheshire at the head of the table, having Jane on his left. The other daughters and the sons occupied the places they were accustomed to on ordinary cases like the present.

In those days—that is to say, in the early part of the present century—Ude was unknown: in the realms-culinary, Mrs. Glasse reigned undisputed queen. The dinner, on the present occasion, was plain, but excellent of its kind; and consisted of a tureen of pea-soup, a fine cod's-head-and-shoulders, a roast sirloin of beef, a stewed rump-steak, and an apple-pie. There were no impertinent and miserable attempts at foreign cookery, which, when it is not the best in the world, is the worst. Not a single dish appeared upon table under false pretences: no mess, indescribable and unwholesome, endeavoured, like some transmarine adventurer, to palm itself off as a something of importance, under cover of a French title. On the contrary, each boldly showed its plain, honest, English face; and the very pie itself was (not that unsatisfactory abridgment called a tart, but) in its requisite conditions of size, form, and contents, an unquestionable apple-pie. No: the Cheshires, though “titled people,” retired from business, and dwelling in that aristocratic quarter of the east, yecept Finsbury-square, were content, like many even of *their* superiors, to employ a woman-cook, and eat good English dinners. As for the *actually* trading or shopkeeping community of that day, we will assert, without fear of disproof, that the ostentatious interchange of dinners *à la Française*, with their accompaniments of Sillery and Chateau-Margaux, was no more known amongst them than—than the Insolvent Court, which did not then exist.

It is not our intention to ridicule the family of the Cheshires; nor, consistently with our character of truth-tellers, could we if we would; for (excepting the knight himself) there was nothing of the ridiculous either in their conduct or manners. Sir Gog was a plain, good man, who had made his fortune as a cheesemonger, chiefly by Government contracts; and had suffered

the infliction of knighthood* for no fault of his own, but simply through the accident of his being sheriff at the time when some great naval victory was achieved, upon which occasion he assisted in carrying an address of congratulation from the City to the king. His only weak point, or, we ought to say, the only one which was sufficiently prominent to be observable, was his pride of title—proud partly of his own, but chiefly of “her ladyship’s ;” and “her ladyship” he looked upon as little less in importance than the first duchess in the land. Lady Cheshire was a plain, sensible, motherly woman : her daughters had been brought up unostentatiously, and in a manner to qualify them to become good wives ; and the sons had received proper and sufficient education to fit them for the positions which they were intended to occupy—namely, the counting-house or the counter. Altogether, the family was one of those respectable middle-class families, of which there existed so many, both east and west, ere the mania was ripe for aping the manners, habits, and mode of living of the superior classes ; and as they affected nothing in any shape beyond what their position entitled them to, so did they present no points obnoxious to ridicule, or for satire to chastise.

Our hero had now been for so long a time—for several months, indeed—accustomed to high life, that he felt as much at his ease in the society of Sir Gog and my lady, as if they had been nothing more than plain *Mr.* and *Mrs.* Upon his first introduction by the knight to her *ladyship*, he naturally experienced a sensation of awe ; nor was this much diminished even by the good-natured assurance which he received from Sir Gog (whom he had met upon three or four previous

* “So,” said C—— to J——, not very long ago, “I see by the newspapers that ——” [a rich nobody, and nothing more], “has just been elevated to the baronetage.”

“Rather say,” replied J——, “the baronetage has been degraded to him.”

occasions), that he would "find her ladyship vastly condescending, and not at all proud." But

Never before stood he in such a presence,

and the consequence alluded to was, in his case at least, inevitable. *Now*, as we have said, it was otherwise with him. He had adopted to its fullest extent one point of Polonius's instructions to his son, "Be thou familiar:" the qualifying clause, "but by no means vulgar," he found to be a piece of advice akin with a vast proportion of that which is most liberally bestowed by those who never give anything else—advice much easier to give than to follow.

"Will you take soup or fish, Mr. Quiddy?" inquired her ladyship.

"Why, my lady," replied he, in an easy, offhand manner, "I'll take fish; though I don't care if I begin with a basin of your ladyship's soup. I'm uncommon partial to pea-soup, and your ladyship's soup is always so uncommon good. And, Sir G.," continued he, addressing the host (his greedy eyes roving from one dish to the other), "as I see you are helping the fish, I'll thank you just to put a mouthful of liver and sound aside against I'm ready for it. I don't think cod worth eating without a little of the liver and sound. Do you, my lady? At least, *I'm* uncommon partial to it."

And be it observed, that whatever Mr. Quiddy was "uncommon partial to," Mr. Quiddy took especial care that that gentleman should, upon no occasion, miss it, either from too little attention, or too much delicacy on his part. For it was clear to him that when he dined at home, at his own expense, he had a *right* to what he liked best; and when he dined out, that his entertainers were bound, both in politeness and hospitality, to supply him with it. As to deferring his own gratification to another's, the mere notion of such a thing he considered as too absurd to be entertained by any rational being.

"Q.," said Sir Gog, "Q., I dare say her ladyship will be happy to condescend to take a glass of wine with you ; wont you, my lady ?"

"Most happy," replied her ladyship.

"Uncommon proud of the honour," said Quiddy, "if her ladyship will just let me eat the mouthful or two of fish I've got on my plate ; I've an uncommon dislike to wine in the middle of my fish."

Fish and soup were removed, and the remainder of the dinner was placed upon the table.

"Now, Mr. Quiddy," said Lady Cheshire, "you see your dinner. We don't treat you as a stranger. We give you just the plain family-dinner we had provided for ourselves, for—ha ! ha ! ha !—really, dear Mr. Quiddy—really we begin to consider you as *one of the family*."

As her ladyship uttered the emphasized words, she gently placed her hand on Quiddy's arm, which was lying spread out halfway across the table.

"Pray, no apology, my dear, good lady," said Quiddy, placing his hand on hers, and tapping it as he spoke ; "pray, no apology, for there's plenty to eat. Uncommon *good* dinner—just the style of dinner I shall give you and my other friends if ever I set up housekeeping. As a bachelor, you know, I—much as I wish it, I—I—not that I couldn't afford it, my lady ; for by sheer industry, thank Heaven ! I have scraped together a few thousands or so ; but as a bachelor—"

"Bachelor, indeed ! More shame for you," said she, laughing ; "bachelor ! I declare that—"

And with scarcely a pause, she continued : "Why, Jane, my love, what *is* the matter with you ? You are so out of spirits and so silent this afternoon, one would really think you are *in love*. Give Jane a little wine, Mr. Quiddy ; talk to her, and see whether *you* can't enliven her."

"Come, miss," said our enlivening friend, with a wink to Lady Cheshire (at the same time rubbing his

hands and slapping them together): "come, miss, what say you to a drop of wine? There"—(and he filled the young lady's glass, like his own, to the very brim)—"don't be frightened at my filling a bumper; you need not drink it all at once. But as you are in love"—(this he uttered in a pretended whisper, accompanied with a nudge of his elbow)—"as you're in love, I'll give you a toast. Here's—Sir G., I'll trouble you for a bit of that stewed rump-steak before it goes away—Here's the health of—No, not that cut: there—a bit out of the middle, and that bit of fat at the corner—Here's the health of the happy man, whoever he is, and may he have plenty of the mopuses. *In short*—while we're about it—eh, my lady? Ho! ho! ho! here's good rich husbands to all three of 'em."

This gallant aspiration of the agreeable Quiddy was by exactly two to one more than was pleasant to her ladyship; and a mother of infinitely less shrewdness than herself would instantly have been satisfied by it, that, whatever might have been his intentions as to marrying, love, or even a preference for either of the young ladies, was altogether out of the question. Her eyes at the same moment met Sir Gog's; and he, remembering the little conversation which had taken place between them just before Mr. Quiddy's arrival, translated in its true sense the negatory motion of his lady's head, by which her look was accompanied.

"I say, Mr. Quiddy," cried Harry, "I'll bet a shilling you are in love."

At this spurt of the young gentleman's, papa and mamma exchanged a rapid but significant glance. The unpremeditated trifle (as many an unpremeditated trifle had done before) *might* lead to an important issue. Jane and Eliza looked (or, perhaps, affected to look) confused; while Clara's "pretty pale face" turned paler than usual, and she trembled in every nerve with dread of the mere possibility that Quiddy's reply to her

young brother's proposal might, in some way or other, affect her.

"I'll not bet, Master Harry," said Quiddy, "for I shouldn't be much the better for winning your shilling, and should be sorry to lose my own;" adding, with a loud laugh—"but, without betting—ho! ho! ho! tell me—ho! ho! ho! what makes you think I'm in love?"

"Why," replied the young logician, "they say that when a person is in love he is happy; and when one is happy, you know, one eats such a load! And so I'll bet you a shilling *you* are in love."

Lady Cheshire stooped her head till her nose nearly touched her plate; the two elder girls and Bill were nearly suffocated by their efforts to restrain a laugh; Clara recovered her composure; Quiddy, filling his mouth, exclaimed, "Good, uncommon good!" leaving it doubtful whether his words were meant in praise of the sally or the steak; while Sir Gog muttered to the causer of this confusion—

"You are too bad, sir; in short, d—d too bad!"

"Why, what have I done, papa?" cried the unconscious offender; "I didn't mean any harm: I'm sure I said it quite in earnest."

"Hold your tongue, sir," continued Sir Gog, in a half-whisper; "hold your tongue, or you'll presently find yourself outside the door—in short, d—d outside. Q., a glass of wine with you; and *that*, let me tell you, is some of my very best Madeira—in short, my d—d very best."

"Uncommon good, indeed, Sir G.," said Quiddy; adding (for the money-value of everything was always uppermost in his mind)—"what may it have stood you in?"

"Wait till the cloth is removed, and I'll tell you a curious little anecdote about this wine," said Sir Gog.

The cloth being removed, and a bottle of port placed upon the table, he thus began:—

"This Madeira, you must know, I imported myself

—I imported the whole butt ; but all that remains of it is the little batch of which we are now drinking ; *that* I paid a hundred shillings a dozen for, and got it by a lucky accident.”

“Stop, Sir Gog,” said Quiddy ; “let me see : twelve in the hundred will go eight and carry um—um—um—aye, eight-and-fourpence per bottle. Now, reckoning fourteen of these glasses to the bottle, that’s um—um—um—Why, Sir Gog, we are drinking this wine at the rate of sevenpence-farthing a glass, all but a fraction !”

“D—n the price, Mr. Quiddy,” said Sir Gog, impatiently ; “fill your glass, and pass the bottle to Bill. There, Bill ; take sevenpence-farthing-all-but-a-fraction’s-worth of Madeira.” And he thought within himself, “What a chandler’s-shop mind the fellow has—in short, d—d chandler’s shop.”

“But how came that batch to cost you more than the rest of the butt ?” inquired Quiddy ; “I can’t understand that.”

“That’s the point of my story,” replied Sir Gog. “When my friend Sir Richard Glum was Lord Mayor, —Stingy Dick, as he was called—Glum, who gave such bad feeds to the aldermen and common-council, that there were fewer deaths from indigestion during his mayoralty than had ever been known since the days of Whittington—ah ! Whittington’s cat would have had a holiday at the Mansion-house in Glum’s time, for the rats and mice all died of starvation. Well, his Majesty’s ministers were to dine with Glum, so, for the honour of the City, I made him a present of six dozen of my very finest Madeira—this same wine. Well, I had the honour of being of the party. At the right of the Lord Mayor sat—”

“Never mind how the party was arranged, Cheshire,” interposed her ladyship ; “that is in no way material to your story.”

“Right, my lady ; her ladyship is right ; it is no way material—in short, d—d in no way. Well—

there was lemonade Vidonia, brandy-and-water Sherry, crab-apple Hock—but not a drop of my very finest Madeira ; gooseberry Champagne, black-currant Port, mulberry Claret—but not a drop of my very finest Madeira. Couldn't imagine what had become of my very finest Madeira. Looked at ministers—never in all my life saw such a set of wry faces—wine excruciating—corners of their mouths screwed up to their nostrils. As for Billy Pitt—lucky thing for us that it did not occur to him at that moment to double the Income-tax. Party broke up unusually early—in short, d—d unusually. Followed Pitt to his carriage—Lord Melville with him. 'Where, sir?' inquired the footman, as he closed the carriage-door. 'Home, as fast as you can drive, to take our wine,' roared the Premier, loud enough for everybody about him to hear. Now, Q., what do you think had become of my very finest Madeira?"

"Can't possibly tell," replied Q.

"Then I'll tell you. Three days after this, met Sourlush, the wine-merchant. Asked me would I like a few dozens of *surprisingly* fine Madeira. Replied, yes. Went down to his counting-house to taste sample. Delighted with it. Had but six dozens, short the sample-bottle. Wouldn't take a shilling less than five pounds the dozen. Bought it all, and gave him a cheque for the money. Wine came home—looked at corks, and what do you think? There was my private seal upon 'em. My own wine! By all that's mean and shabby, my own very finest Madeira! Stingy Dick had exchanged it with him for the nasty stuff he had half-poisoned his Majesty's ministers with and pocketed two-pound-ten by the bargain. There, sir; what do you say to that?"

"Say!" exclaimed Quiddy, bursting into a loud laugh; "say? Ho! ho! ho! why, I say it was an uncommon deep trick."

"Deep! Mr. Quiddy?" exclaimed Sir Gog, in a tone of indignation; "deep! *I* say it was an uncommon *dirty* trick—in short, *da-a-a-n'd* uncommon dirty."

After a short time—

"And now, Q.," said Sir Gog, "now what say you to a glass of port? Port and Madeira—no claret, no champagne—no ceremony with you—eh, my boy? As her ladyship says, we consider you as one of the family—in short, d—d one of the family—eh, my lady?"

"Quite, quite," said her ladyship. "And *do* give Jane a little port, Mr. Quiddy."

"I'd rather not take any, mamma," said Jane.

"What!" exclaimed mamma; "refuse Mr. Quiddy! I'm sure, Jane, dear, *you'll* not refuse Mr. *Quiddy*."

But the effect of these words (though they were pointedly uttered, and with a prolonged, singing sort of emphasis on the pretty name) was completely neutralized by Harry, who said, in precisely the same tone—

"And if he'll offer *me* a glass of wine, I'm sure *I* wont refuse Mr. *Quiddy*."

"I request you will not give him any," said her ladyship, biting her nether lip.

"Oh, come, my lady," said Quiddy, "your ladyship will allow me to give him a little. Harry is a favourite of mine."

"Thank'e, sir," said Harry. "And I say, Mr. Quiddy—I know which of the *girls* is your favourite?"

"Jane, love," adroitly interposed Lady Cheshire, and laughingly, "don't mind what that impudent boy says."

"I wasn't going to say anything to Jane, 'ma; you know it's Clara *he* has a preference for, but it's *Jane* who likes *him* best, you know."

"Leave the room, sir—I desire you will instantly leave the room," said her ladyship; and the command was repeated by the knight.

"Now, why ought I to be turned out of the room

for that?" said the boy, in a tone of remonstrance; "for just before Mr. Quidy came, when I was outside the drawing-room, kneeling down to tie my shoe, I heard you say to papa—"

But ere the young gentleman could finish his speech, he found himself, by the interposition of Sir Gog's strong arm, outside the dining-room.

Quiddy, with that protective instinct which, in common with the rest of the brute creation, he possessed in an extraordinary degree—for in that category we include the intensely-selfish of the human species—Quiddy began to suspect that some plan, scheme, plot, or conspiracy was forming, whose object tended more to the interest of the Cheshires than his own. To use the words in which the thought passed through his mind, he began to "smell a rat," and resolved to be vigilant accordingly. Good as were Sir Gog's dinners, he was not to be "trapped" into a marriage with one of Sir Gog's daughters; and this he would let him plainly understand, even at the risk of forfeiting his convenient acquaintance with the family, as it had lately happened to him with another of the same class (No. 2), who had endeavoured "to take him in," in a similar manner.

Lady Cheshire, somewhat disconcerted by what had just occurred, and not exactly knowing what better to do, desired Jane to sing a song, reminding her that her papa liked a song after dinner.

"Ay, Jane, a song," said Sir Gog; "I do like a song; it gives a relish to one's wine. What say you, Q.?"

"Oh—yes—no objection in life, if *you* like it," Sir G., cautiously replied Quiddy; "but pray, not on my account."

"What will you sing, dear?" said mamma. "Let me see—oh, sing the—you know what I mean; Mr. Quidy's favourite; the—"

"Pray, my lady," eagerly cried Quiddy, "pray, my lady, never mind me. I've no particular *favourite*. Let Miss Jane sing what Sir G. likes. I assure your ladyship it is the same thing to me, my lady."

"But, mamma, you know I've a bad cold," said Jane.

"Never mind that, Jane, love; Mr. Quiddy will make allowance for that."

"Oh, to be sure, my lady. Never mind your cold, Miss Jane; it's all one to me, I assure you," said the gallant.

And the young lady sang to the accompaniment of the cracking of nuts and the crunching of apples by our hero. The air was the well-known one called "The Streamlet;" but whether the words she connected with it were English, Italian, Spanish, French, or High Dutch, she, in the most young-ladylike manner, left her hearers in doubt.

"Well done, Jenny—well done," said Sir Gog. "And now, my darling Clara—"

Clara hastily rose from her chair, threw her arms round her father's neck, and putting her lips close to his ear, whispered—

"Don't ask *me*, dear papa: I can't bear to do anything when *he's* here."

"Then if you don't like to sing," said Sir Gog, patting her cheek, "you shan't, my pet—in short, d—d shan't. Come, Q.; fill a bumper, and give us *your* song."

With this invitation Phineas readily complied, for he took pride to himself for what he called "singing a good song." He was blest with a loud, coarse voice; when singing, he swung his head from one shoulder to the other alternately after each word; and in the delivery of the words, carefully emphasized his blunders" (as Miss St. Egremont formerly expressed it), "in ostentatious display of his imagined accuracy."

"Which of my songs will you have?" inquired he.
 "You know I only sing two, Sir G. Shall it be—"

"By the gaily circlin' glarse
 Ve can see 'ow minutes parse,
 By the 'ollow cask ve're told—"

"I prefer the other," said the knight—

"Flow thou regal purple stream,
 Tinted by the solar beam."

And our convivialist proceeded to sing :

"Flow—thou—*regle*—*perpul*—stream—
 Tinctured—by—the—*solo*—beam—
 In—my—goblet—sparklin'—rise—
 Cheer—my 'art—and glad my—*heyes*, &c."

While this vocal display was proceeding, Sir Gog manifested his approbation by nodding, and, with the tips of his fingers, tapping the table out of time. During the same period, her ladyship had full employment in looking small daggers at the young ladies, who were evincing their delight by forcibly compressing their lips and making strange little noises in their throats. As for Bill, so enraptured was he, that he had nearly choked himself by thrusting his pocket-handkerchief halfway down his throat.

"Capital song, Q.," said Sir Gog, sending the decanter to him; "capital song, and capitally sung. Deserves a glass of wine. Go on, go on; you and I can just buzz that bottle, and then I'll give you another sort. Here, Bill, is the key of the cellar. Get a bottle out of No. 7 binn—green corks. Bring it carefully—don't shake it—will decant it myself. Always decant my own wine—never trust that job to a bustling footman, or a busy housemaid. You never see my wine looking like a November atmosphere in Cheapside, but bright as a ruby. I'm lord of the wine cellar: her ladyship condescends to superintend everything else in the house; don't you, my lady?"

"Why, to say the truth," replied her ladyship, "I take but little trouble in that way *now*: Jane has relieved me of that. In fact, Mr. Quiddy, *she* is house-keeper, and an excellent housekeeper she is. She superintends—regulates everything; looks to the weekly bills, and—and—ha! ha! ha! I ought to be ashamed to confess it, but, really, Jane is a better economist even than I am."

"You don't say so, my lady!" said Quiddy, with a stupid look of feigned astonishment.

"Indeed I might almost say the same thing of Eliza," continued her ladyship, after a pause, which Quiddy did not break by one single word of encouragement. And here was another pause.

"In fact, Mr. Quiddy," she resumed, "*in* fact, I have brought up *all* my girls to be good, careful mistresses of a family. They have no high, fine, nonsensical notions; they are all good girls—excellent girls—though I say it to their faces. You needn't blush, Jane, love. [Pause.] Hem! [Pause.] Their MARRIED sisters are proofs of what I say, dear Mr. Quiddy."

"Oh, bless your ladyship's soul, my lady, I don't doubt your ladyship in the least," said Quiddy; adding, as he raised his half-emptied glass to his lips, "and as I said before, in my jocose way, please your ladyship—Ho! ho! ho!—here's wishing good rich husbands to all three of 'em."

"The force of *mother* could no further go." Lady Cheshire felt convinced that her attempts to fix "the great-what-do-they-call-it" for either of her daughters was a hopeless task, and she looked—accordingly.

Sir Gog had paid little or no attention to what had just been passing; for, during its progress, he had been intently occupied in decanting the wine brought to him by Master Bill. Having performed the operation with great care, and with corresponding success, he held the decanter up to the light, and, smacking his lips, pushed the wine towards his amiable guest, saying—

"There, Q., tell me what you think of *that*. That is a better glass of wine than the last." •

"No need of better, Sir G.," said Quiddy ; "the last was quite good enough for me."

"Why, to say the truth," said the knight, "it is good enough for anybody. Flatter myself I haven't a bad bottle in my cellar. I have different qualities, to be sure—good, better, and best—and always go on by degrees from the first to the last. Not like our friends Flasher and Bragby. Flasher begins by giving you a good bottle, just to set you smacking your lips while your palate is fresh, and gradually lets you down to sloe-juice. But Bragby actually has but one sort of wine in his cellar—that he gives you all the way through, and hardly drinkable it is—in short, d—d hardly. To be sure, he cracks about the second bottle being older than the first, and the third older than the second, and *that* he may do with a safe conscience, for older it certainly is ; but I tell you what, Q.—ha ! ha ! ha !—the third is, to a minute, as much older than the first, as his guests are than when they were drinking it. No, no : I'm of poor Slymore's opinion : if you can't afford to give your friends good wine, why, give 'em good punch, or good grog, or (what can't hurt them, at any rate) even good, wholesome nothing-at-all ; but that to poison 'em with bad anything is by no means the act of a friend—in short—"

"Talking of poor Slymore," said Quiddy, interrupting him, "I—"

"Begging your pardon, my dear Q.," said Sir Gog, interrupting him in his turn ; "begging your pardon, I was merely going to add—in short, d—d by no means the act of a friend !"

"I was about to say, Sir G.," said Quiddy (fixing his cunning eyes upon the knight), "I have been told Slymore died rich—uncommon rich—eh ?"

"I shouldn't at all wonder if he did," replied Sir Gog, "for he had a very fine business."

"Ah," said Quiddy, rubbing his hands with an air of satisfaction. "But you *think* he did—eh, Sir G.?"

"Why—a—yes, I should think so: I don't positively know, but I have no reason in the world for thinking to the contrary."

"To be sure—yes—ha—um—," muttered Quiddy, thoughtfully stroking his chin. "As you say, Sir G., he *had* a very fine business. By-the-bye, just before dinner I was going to tell you I went to the play last night, and there I had the pleasure of meeting his niece, Miss St. Egremont. An uncommon fine 'oman—*gal*, I mean. Eh, Sir Gog?—Eh, my lady?"

"Mr. *Quiddy*!" exclaimed her ladyship, in a tone not easy to describe; at the same time drawing herself up, and giving him a look which, with the rapidity of lightning, glanced round the table, *over*, rather than *at*, her daughters, and again settled upon him.

Sir Gog merely ahem'd, and gulped his wine.

"Why, my lady," continued our obtuse friend (no more understanding the meaning of Lady Cheshire's hint than if it had been a diplomatic despatch in cipher)—"why, my lady, beauty is all a matter of taste, to be sure; but to my fancy, Miss St. Eg—"

Simultaneously, Sir Gog cried, "Q.—Q.—.Q.— drink your wine; drink your wine," and Lady Cheshire repeated her exclamation (but with the emphasis differently placed) "*Mis-ter Quiddy*!!"

Her ladyship rose, and her example was followed by the young ladies.

"Come with me and your sisters to the drawing-room, William," said she, in a solemn tone. As she passed Sir Gog, significant looks were exchanged between them.

"When you and your *friend* desire coffee, Sir Gog, said her ladyship, drily, "you had better order it to be served *here*. Good afternoon to you, Mr. Quiddy."

These words, from the tone and manner in which they were delivered, fell upon the ear of the guest like

the knell of departed dinner invitations. And the lady (followed by her daughters and son) walked, or, rather, strutted out of the room.

The gentlemen left to themselves, an awkward silence of some minutes ensued. Quiddy, though conscious that he had given offence, was not certain by *which* of the only two causes he could conceive to have been offensive.

"If," thought he, "it was because I let her ladyship see that I was not such a young mouse as to be caught in the marriage trap with three holes which she was laying for me, why, I'm not sorry for it. Self-preservation is the first law of natur'; and the trap that catches P. Q. must be baited with something more tempting than a paltry fifteen hundred. If she was jealous at my saying that Miss St. Egremont is an uncommon fine 'oman, why, I can only say her ladyship was an uncommon old fool for being so."

That he could have offended by alluding at all, in the presence of so dignified a personage as Lady Gog Cheshire, to a young gentlewoman standing in a somewhat equivocal position, such a notion never entered his mind.

But was the last suggested the *real* cause of the lady's displeasure? We think not: and we think, moreover, that had our hero manifested the slightest intention of converting either of the three Misses Cheshire into Mrs. Phineas Quiddy, he would have received no more severe a rebuke for his indiscretion than a playful "Fie, fie, you naughty man! be quiet, do."

And here some inquisitive person may desire to know how Lady Cheshire had become aware that there existed any Miss Honoria St. Egremont in all the world. This curiosity it is easy to gratify. Sir Gog had visited Slymore at the cottage in Lisson Grove, where *he* had seen Slymore's niece. Now we will ask, in the words of Shylock, "Are you satisfied?" If not, we must remind you that never yet was there a husband

that withheld a secret from his wife ; in return for which unlimited confidence (we need *not* remind you) never yet was wife who had any concealments from her husband !

The awful silence which we have noticed was at length thus broken by Sir Gog :—

“Well, Q., you have *done* it,—in short, d—d done it.”

“Done ?” stammered Quiddy ; “really, I—a—I don’t know, but—a—I—”

“Why, Mr. Q.”—[the Mr. was ominous]—

“Why, Mr. Q., to talk in the presence of a personage of her ladyship’s rank and title about—and before my daughters, too—But that might have been a slip, so we’ll say no more about it. But, to come to the point : you come here very often ; you are seen a good deal with my daughters—Ahem ! my *unmarried* daughters—and the world begins to inquire—”

Oh, this poor world of ours ! Unless it is shamefully belied, it is the most pestilent busybody of a planet of any in the whole system ! the very T—m H—ll of the universe !

“To be plain, Mr. Q., the world *does* inquire, which of my girls you mean ? So now it’s out—in short, d—d out.”

“Which ! mean ?” exclaimed Quiddy, with a marvellously innocent look. “Really, Sir Gog, I—I don’t in the least understand you.”

“Why, then, Mr. Quiddy, I suppose you have a preference for one of them—indeed her ladyship supposes so, too ; and as her ladyship and I were saying this morning, that, as they have plenty of offers—plenty—plenty—and—as by shilly-shallying you are standing in the way of others—in one word, Mr. Quiddy, what are your *intentions*, as her ladyship calls that sort of thing ?”

“Why, Sir G.,” replied Quiddy, with some confusion—“why, I don’t mean to say that fifteen

hundred pounds (which I am told is your mark) would not have been worth my consideration, *once upon a time*; but you know—indeed you *must* know, Sir G.,—that *now*—why—you—I—”

“Ha! then I suppose we understand one another, sir,” said Sir Gog.

“Why—a—ye—yes, I suppose we do, Sir Gog.”

“Why, then, Mr. Phineas Quiddy, I must take the liberty to tell you that your conduct has been—”

But Mr. Phineas Quiddy prevented the liberty, whatever it was intended to be, by suddenly drawing out his watch and exclaiming—“Bless my soul! no notion it was so late! Quarter past nine, I declare! Must wish you good-night, Sir Gog. Wish you a very good-night.” And he hastily shuffled out of the room.

“Well, my dear?” eagerly inquired Lady Cheshire, as Sir Gog entered the drawing-room.

“Moonshine, my lady—moonshine,” was the reply. “As I suspected, he never had any intention of marrying at all.”

“Well! upon my word!” exclaimed the disappointed mamma. “Well! and that we should have wasted our civilities upon such a—Cheshire—my dear Cheshire—I hope you will never invite the disagreeable fellow to this house again.”

“*Never* invite him!—in short, *da—a—an’d* never, my lady.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A grave Essay considerably suppressed—An Appeal to the kind World on behalf of Miss St. Egremont—Our Hero consoles himself for his rupture with the Cheshires, and takes a determined Step in Relation to Miss St. Egremont—Serious reflections in Surrey-street, and a Surprise.

THERE was a period in the history of our literature, ere more books were written than there were people to read them : ere books possessed, as they now do (greatly to the relief of the labours of authorship), the sublime faculty of writing themselves—in other words, ere books apparently written by Nobody are only *edited* by Somebody ; and that was the period when the reading public was satisfied from Tuesday till Saturday, and again from Saturday till Tuesday, with a short, detached essay “ On the Propriety of being Virtuous,” or “ On the Wickedness of Vice,” or on some subject of a like didactic character. We must not be misunderstood as intending an unbecoming sneer at the exquisite essayists, the unrivalled, the inimitable, of the period to which we allude. We make the allusion for the mere purpose of drawing attention to the habits, and wants, and expectations of the readers of the present day, so different from those of their predecessors ; because this consideration it is which has induced us (unwisely, perhaps) to suppress a grave essay we had composed, and intended solely for the edification of the fair sex, “ On the irregularity of being any one’s niece but your uncle’s.”

And here observe the delicacy of the epithet we had employed—*Irregularity* ! Indeed the essay throughout was written in a style of Addisonian urbanity. It

contained not a line of coarse invective or of harsh rebuke. It was altogether calculated rather to lead than to drive; for we are certain that the amiable portion of the creation to whom our essay was addressed, would rarely require to be driven if those who undertake to be their guides were expert in the gentler art of leading them.

“Sir, we will not be contradicted; nor do we hold your boasted experience in the slightest esteem!”

Our warmth is pardonable, for here is one who presumes to whisper to us, that, once in the course of a long and travelled life, he did meet with a lady who was neither to be led *nor* driven!

From this proem it may be surmised that Miss Honoria St. Egremont is not far distant from our thoughts. Such indeed is the fact.

Now, mark! We are not about to offer a single word in defence of the young lady’s “irregularity;” no, not even by casting, as we might do, a large share of the blame upon the questionable uncle—far from it, far from it: on the other hand, we are not going to preach. We have not smuggled her into notice under false pretences: we have descended to no mystifying, no pernicious dallyings with morality; and, as we have not attempted to present her for better than she is, we may claim from those to whom we have introduced her that they will not set her down for worse. Beyond the one avowed, we are not aware that her whole past life stands chargeable with an offence. And who shall say that she will not render a purer account of the remainder of it, if you, O World! properly moral, but *sometimes* persecuting, unrelenting World, do not rudely slam the door of exclusion in the face of her repentance!

Three days had elapsed since Quiddy’s visit to Surrey-street. In this interval nothing of importance had there occurred. Honoria’s mind was much occupied

in considering how she might best place her little fortune so as to enable her to live upon it with decent comfort ; and in the hope of meeting with some aid to her reflections, she every morning carefully read through the advertisements in the *Times*. This was, *then*, the employment of but a short quarter of an hour, for the same journal of that time bore in size no proportion to its present gigantic dimensions. Could any of its readers of that day see it at this, they would declare it (like a thriving child) to have "grown out of all knowledge." But, as this phrase is somewhat equivocal, we had better "rise to explain that we mean it merely in the nursery sense." Hitherto, however, she had met with nothing to enlighten her, except the amiable announcement, that, if any lady or gentleman happened to have from a thousand to twelve hundred pounds at their immediate disposal, some other lady or gentleman would be very happy to borrow it of them. Offers of accommodation of this kind were, indeed, numerous ; but there was not one of them which exactly suited her.

As for Mrs. Fleecer, she had frequently, in the course of the same time, expressed her "wonder" that Mr. Quiddy had not repeated his visit, especially considering the polite invitation she had given him ; which wonderments were met by Honoria either with a "Psha !" of indifference, or a more pointed, "So much the better."

And what was Quiddy about all this time ? On the night of his rupture with the Cheshires (for such it clearly was), he slept as soundly as ever, for on his way home he had made up his account on that matter. On the losing side, there stood only the loss of his acquaintance with that worthy family, which, as it could not, in the nature of things, have been of much longer duration, he estimated at no great value ; while on the side of profits there appeared, firstly, a considerable amount in dinners had and received ; and secondly,

his escape from a snare in which he might have been unwarily taken had the acquaintance continued. All things considered, the balance was so much in his favour that he looked upon himself as having by far the best of the bargain.

During those three days Quiddy's mind was much occupied with his love-[of-money] affair with Miss St. Egremont. Touching her fortune he was satisfied. Mrs. Fleecer's alarm upon the morning of his visit to her, at being reminded of her indiscretion in having revealed to him its amount, would of itself have been sufficient to assure him upon that subject; but Sir Gog Cheshire's declaration of his belief that Slymore had died rich served to confirm the point. He resolved, therefore, to delay no longer the commencement of operations: the only difficulty was, how to open the siege. He thought much upon the subject, nor did he consider the time bestowed upon it as altogether wasted, for the reason that it was at the least as much a matter of business as of love. He at length resolved (not unwisely, perhaps) to fire his first shot at the young lady's friend and confidante, Mrs. Fleecer.

Accordingly, he addressed to the latter a note; but as letters are held to be the property of the receiver, we will not deprive Mrs. Fleecer of any portion of her right in it by prematurely revealing its contents. Let us trust, however, that our abstinence will be rewarded by hearing them in due time from the lady herself.

We here stop for a moment to observe, that we stated in its proper place the probability that we might not again have occasion to return to our hero in his money-manufactory; nor has any such occasion occurred. But it will be gratifying to his friends and admirers to be assured that that concern proceeded in the same manner, and (since with increased means) more prosperously than ever.

On the fourth evening our two ladies were sitting

together, and having finished their tea, Miss St. Egremont took up a book (for she delighted in reading, and "poor Tom" had left her the whole of his small, but well-selected library), and Mrs. Fleecer took her needle-work. For some time both were silently occupied. At length, the latter having occasion to thread her needle, she took that opportunity to put into speech the thought that had possessed her mind:—

"But now, my dear Norey, what do you mean to do?"

"What, indeed!" exclaimed Honoria; "for days past I have been thinking of nothing else. To live respectably in London upon my small means, smaller even than I had calculated upon—to live respectably is impossible, and live otherwise I will not."

"Why, surely, you have no thoughts of going to bury yourself alive in the country!" said Fleecer. "As you yourself said the other day, you would mope to death in a month."

"It will not be what I should prefer," said Honoria; "but if I cannot do what I would, I must needs do what I can. And—circumstanced as I am—"

She paused, and a tear stole down her cheek. This, however, was not perceived by Fleecer, who had resumed her work. "No," continued Honoria, with energy, "I *will not* remain in London: that point, at any rate, I am decided upon."

Fleecer took off her spectacles, laid her work down upon the table, and, placing her hand gently upon Honoria's, said, in a tone of kindness—

"Norey, my dear, you are a good girl, and, as I have often told you, I love you as if you were my own daughter. That is the best thing you can do, and I advise it"—(adding the prudent qualification)—"unless anything better should turn up."

"And do you expect the sky to fall, or something quite as extraordinary to happen, just for my accommodation? What is to turn up, Fleecer?"

"Why—ha! ha! ha!—as I have said before, a good rich husband, Norey—that's it."

"I see," said Honoria, laughing, "you are thinking of your eternal Mr. Quiddy. Ah! Fleecer, Fleecer, when once a foolish notion takes possession of your silly noddle, there is no driving it out again. But make your mind easy upon that score, for I declare that nothing on earth—"

"Well—well," said Fleecer, interrupting her. "But where do you think of settling?"

"That, of course, must depend upon circumstances. But here—here is an advertisement which I copied out of the newspaper this morning."

And she read from a slip of paper, this:—

"A widow lady, without children, living in a small house, pleasantly situated in a cheap country, at about sixty miles from London, would have no objection to receive, as lodger and boarder, a lady similarly circumstanced, if in other respects suitable. Terms moderate. A good reference as to respectability will be required. For further particulars, address (post-paid) to Mrs. Woelfield, Starveleigh Cottage, near Pesterton."

"Now," said Honoria, "I like the appearance of that;" adding, with some hesitation, "but the difficulty—the reference—"

"Difficulty!" exclaimed Mrs. Fleecer, "refer at once to ME. Mrs. Fleecer?—*Surrey-street?*—*STRAND?* What *can* be more respectable, Norey?"

"Why, that was not exactly the——But, no matter. I'll go again into the City to-morrow, and consult Scott upon the subject."

"Do," said Mrs. Fleecer. "But there's no need to be in a hurry about going away, child. To be sure, I can't afford to let you have these drawing-rooms at the price you pay, if they should be wanted by anybody else; that's human nature, you know, dear. But there's the spare-bed in my room which you can have

for nothing, and you *shall* too, because that will be no expense to me; and a more comfortabler bed, I'll defy anybody in all Surrey-street to show. As to the use of my little sitting-room, that, of course, I couldn't charge for; and a better, or a snugger, or a nicer-furnish'der little—"

But the lady's eulogy of her sitting-room was interrupted by the servant-maid, who brought to her a letter which had just been delivered by the postman.

"What a beautiful handwriting! Only see, what beautiful flourishes!" exclaimed Mrs. Fleecer, in admiration of the superscription. "Now I wonder who it can be from!"

"From the long, narrow shape of it, it looks like a tradesman's bill," said Miss St. Egremont. "Do you know the seal?"

"I can't exactly say I do," replied Fleecer, "for it's only fastened with a wafer. Now I *do* wonder—"

"You may easily put an end to your wonder, then, by just opening the letter, Fleecer."

This hint was immediately taken.

"Why, Norey!" exclaimed the astonished lady—"why!—what do you think?—Well, if it isn't from Mr. Quiddy himself, I declare! Only listen."

And this was the gentleman's billet :—

"Mark-Lane, Fenc^h. St.

"Mr. Quiddy presents comps to Mrs. Fleaser, will be happy to have the pleas^{re} of coming up to-morrow afternoon to drink a dish of tea if not better engaged.

"P.S.—P. Q. presents most respect^l comps to the *fare moaner*."

"Well," said Honoria, laughing, "I don't think it altogether civil to say that he'll come to you if he should not be better engaged."

"Oh, nonsense," said Fleecer; "he means if *I'm* not better engaged."

"Whatever he may mean, he certainly says it," said Honoria.

But Mr. Quiddy, as a writer, was not singular in the delusion that, because he understood his own meaning, it must necessarily be equally intelligible to the reader.

"What a style! what a manner! what a form! The very man himself in every point," continued Honoria, laughing heartily as she spoke. "And what do you intend about this?"

"See him, of course," replied Fleecer; "only I do wish he wouldn't spell my name in such an ungenteel manner. It is the only fault in the letter, for the writing is like copperplate."

"Well, do as you please; but, remember—the fair mourner, as he so elegantly *intends* to call me, will not be of the party."

Fleecer made no reply to this, thinking it possible the lady might change her mind when the visitor should arrive; and having taken writing materials, she replied to the note thus:—

"Surrey-street.

"Mrs. Fleecer"—[the two letters which, in Quiddy's note, had been displaced by "ungenteel" interlopers, being pointedly underlined]—"will be most happy to have the pleasure to drink tea with Mr. Quiddy at her house, at 6 a clock punctual to-morrow."

She was about to fold the note, when, muttering to herself—

"Come; I may as well do the thing genteel," she added, as a postscript in the corner—"N.B. Muffins."

Fleecer folded and reopened the note, and folded and reopened it again. At last, she said—

"Norey, my dear—mayn't I—mayn't I just say, 'Miss St. Egremont sends her—' anything you like, you know."

"At your peril," replied Miss St. Egremont.

The note being duly folded, sealed, and directed, the little maid was despatched with it to the post-office,

CHAPTER XXIX.

Love's Labour Lost—A Digression touching Fools' Caps—
Our Hero's Pleasure not unalloyed—Miss St. Egremont's
important Interview with Mr. Harry Scott—The *Thugs* of
Social Life, the Time-stranglers—A Model for City junior
Partners.

IN a dramatic composition it will not unfrequently occur that a point upon which the author has bestowed his utmost care, and to which, consequently, he trusts for an equivalent effect upon his audience, will pass (in theatrical phrase) "without a hand;" or, which is still more mortifying, without silently extorting a tear or exciting a smile, according to its intention. So did it happen in the instance of our hero's note to Mrs. Fleecer. The body of that composition had cost him comparatively but little pains; and although the result of only two sketches previously made on the dirty back of a letter, yet was its success perfect. Not so, however, in either respect, with its highly-elaborated postscript. *That* had not been struck off at a white heat: on the contrary, it was the work of many successive efforts, passing through a variety of forms, from the dry, tame, and spiritless.

"P.S.—Mr. Quiddy comps to Miss St. Eggermunt," till it became at length what we find it—the elegant, the refined, the touching, the poetical,

"P.S.—P. Q. presents most respect^l comps to the *fare moaner*,"

—yet did this, after all, prove to be a total failure!

And why had this postscript, this mere tail to the body, been so disproportionably laboured? For the best conceivable reason, that this seeming tail was, in fact, the body, nay, the very soul of the missive: it was the pur-

pose for which the rest was little more than a pretext. True, his self-invitation was adroitly addressed to Mrs. Fleecer; but this pointed, yet delicately-turned message to the young lady could not fail, as he thought, to render it apparent that the latter was uppermost in his mind, and to bring some complimentary notice in return.

But man is born to disappointment, nor are his best-concerted schemes invariably successful. This we assert with indomitable confidence, yet thereby shall our modesty suffer no impeachment; for, claiming not the merit of originality for the observation, with singular candour we admit that it has been uttered in our hearing much oftener than once, by many more than one person. Not so with him from whom we first heard it. With grave look and uplifted finger, he prefaced it with, "*Now mark what I say*: Man is born, &c." At once we looked up to him as a profound thinker, a philosopher, a man who had seen much of the world, and carefully treasured the fruits of his experience; nor was it till we had been assured that he heard the saying from somebody else, who, in his turn, had heard it from another, and so on back to the days of Noah, that our reverence for his wisdom suffered the smallest diminution.

With respect to the unacknowledged adoption of other people's——

But here let us stop, lest Mr. Any-letter-of-the-alphabet, or Sir Any-number-of-asterisks, or any equally ambitious aspirant to a reputation for *originality* and *readiness* of wit, should charge us with a personal allusion to one or other of them.

Ha! ha! ha! the mere thought of it makes one laugh outright. A fool's cap is sportively thrown up into the air. Amongst the thousand heads which are accidentally passing at the time, the odds are about nine-hundred-and-ninety-nine against its falling upon a head which it fits to a nicety. One picks it up and tries it on; then another; but it does not accommodate

itself exactly to either. By a little cutting and contriving, to be sure, it might be made to serve tolerably well. But they are a couple of sensible fellows, much too knowing to take trouble to adjust to their own heads a fool's cap never intended for them, but thrown at random : so they'll none on't ; and away they go, nor ever intimate, even by a whisper, that any fool's cap had fallen within a hundred leagues of them.

A third, less discreet, rushes forward—

“Hold there, my masters !” cries he to the crowd ; “give *me* that fool's cap ; I'll swear 'twas made for me, so wear it I will.”

He tries it on ; 'twill scarcely hold upon the crown of his head : 'tis evident to everybody, himself excepted, the cap was never meant for him. But, by dint of pulling and tugging at it, *assisted by some good-natured friend (who, bent on a little innocent mischief, and laughing in his sleeve all the while, encourages him in his delusion)*, he forces it first over one ear, then over the other ; and fuming and fretting, and vowing vengeance against the wicked wight that made it, exhibits himself to the town in a fool's cap of his own choosing.

“'Tis none of yours, man,” cries the maker ; “'twas never intended for you ; I should be ashamed to turn out of hand so miserable a misfit : nevertheless, if you are resolved upon wearing it, why, in Heaven's name, wear it. But, prithee, don't say I took measure of *you* for it : 'twould lose me my reputation as a tolerable workman.”

But the remonstrance is in vain. The volunteer wearer has managed to squeeze his own head into a chance fool's cap, nor rests he satisfied till he himself has persuaded the town to believe that *the cap fits him*.

Now, is it not strange that a man should——But, contrary to our custom, we are digressing ; so return we to our hero,

Man, as we said, is born to disappointments ; nor was Quiddy altogether an exception to the rule.

"Ha ! from Mrs. Fleecer," exclaimed he, when next morning he opened that lady's note.

But his satisfaction at finding his self-invitation so readily accepted was considerably abated by the neglect of his P.S.

How ! nothing pretty in return for his exquisite prettiness ! Nay, worse than nothing—"N.B. Muffins !" What could be the meaning of this ? Had he offended the lady of ten thousand, or was this word applied in anger, in derision, in contempt ? He referred to the copy of his note, and read the postscript forty times over, but therein nothing offensive could he find. On the contrary ; his "comps" were "most respect ;" and as to the "*fare moaner*," he could have written twenty business-letters in the time that had engaged his imaginative powers in the inventing of that one elegant little phrase.

"Yes, that must be it, after all," thought he : "a new-fashioned, or genteeler word for 'fudge,' or 'blarney ;' yes, that's it : 'Fare moaner'—'Muffins !' *I wish I had not wrote it.*"

A wish—ah ! unavailing !—that occurs frequently, and to many who have without due consideration put black upon white.

Another reflection crossed his mind—one which we earnestly recommend to the careful attention of all whom it may concern :

"Now, this comes of trying to write fine, instead of being plain and simple."

Having sufficiently worried himself by twisting and turning Mrs. Fleecer's one-worded N.B. into all manner of offensive meanings, he at length deliberately read her note through, beginning at the beginning. A flood of light burst upon his mind.

"Ho, ho, ho ! I see : ho, ho, ho ! how uncommon stupid of me ! Tea and muffins. That's it."

Malice, slander, libel, blasphemy, treason, have ere now been wrung out of a few words, the worst no worse than "muffins," by simply detaching them from their context, but which, when in connexion with it, were as innocent as lambs, or doves, or watergruel—or anything else that may serve as a powerfully weak simile. So think not, Mr. Phineas Quiddy, that you are the first who has so erred.

But still, relative to the important point, the lady's note was unsatisfactory. The heiress had not deigned to notice his gallant message to her. How was this to be accounted for? Perhaps Mrs. Fleecer had failed to communicate it to her: if so, that lady would have shown herself to be "so uncommon ungrateful" for his elegant present to her, that such a case was hardly in human nature. Perhaps Miss St. Egremont had already fulfilled her intention of quitting London: that would be "so uncommon awkward," as an impediment to his proceedings, that he could not bear to dwell upon the suggestion. Perhaps she did not intend to be of the party, and thence her silence: for this, however, there was consolation, for if left alone with her friend he would enjoy a better opportunity for "pumping" her, touching Honoria's fortune and sundry minor matters concerning her, besides establishing himself more firmly in Mrs. Fleecer's good graces. Perhaps (and, in his mind, most reasonable of all) it was owing to the young lady's "uncommon pride," which was perfectly natural considering she was rich.

At length, after much uneasiness and worry, he mentally exclaimed, "I think I'll not think any more about it: six o'clock will soon be here, and then I shall know the rights of it."

So, opening a book—it was a book of accounts, almost the only species of literature he indulged in—he diverted his mind with that.

Meanwhile, the object of his affections was considerably nearer to him than the voice of Love (which, like

the voice of Nature, is unerring—*on the Stage*) condescended to whisper to him. Miss St. Egremont, in fact, was closeted with Mr. Scott, of the firm of Whobble and Scott, in his private counting-house, in Birchin-lane, Cornhill.

* * * * *

Now these six stars are intended to represent a quarter of an hour's-worth of conversation, of nearly two hours' duration, between Mr. Scott and the lady. From its concluding portion, which is all we shall report of it, the whole substance of the precedent part may be readily inferred.

"As I said before, Mr. Scott, I consider your conduct as that of a brother."

"Candidly and honestly, as I just now told you, Miss St. Egremont, I know no person but yourself for whom I would undertake such a trust; for, to be honest and candid, such—as I before observed—such was my regard for poor Slymore, such is my respect for you—"

"And, as I have already said, I cannot be too grateful to you for your kindness, sir."

"But honestly and candidly, I must again remind you, miss, that I will not undertake to *ensure* you a *larger* return than eight *per cent.* for your little capital: that must be perfectly well understood between us."

"Why, sir, as we were saying, that will produce me nearly a hundred a-year, and I shall be well satisfied with that."

"But to be candid and honest with you, madam, let me again repeat, that if you find any means—any means whatever of doing better with your money, I shall feel much hurt—honestly and candidly speaking—vastly—exceedingly hurt, if, from any false delicacy, you hesitate for a single moment to withdraw it from me at a minute's notice. And that is being candid and honest with you—which, as a man of business (as I have so often repeated to you) I always think to be best."

"With regard to the widow lady's advertisement in the *Times*, Mr. Scott, I think you said—"

"Yes; I like the appearance of it amazingly: and honestly and candidly, as I have already assured you, it will give me the greatest possible pleasure if you will refer her to me—that is to say, refer to Whobble and Scott, and I'll reply to the letter. That will be much more respectable than a reference to your lodginghouse-keeper."

"And you are still of opinion, sir, that I ought to write to that lady in the name of—"

"Oh, Mrs. Slymore, Mrs. Slymore, by all manner of means, my dear madam: that is my candid and honest opinion."

"And I think we settled it that the day after to-morrow at three o'clock, sir—"

"Yes, at three; and that, as I said, will allow time for me, as poor Slymore's executor, to sell the stock, and for our solicitor to draw up some paper or other for your security. For, as I before impressed it upon you, honestly and candidly, never trust your best friend in these matters without receiving from him some written document for your protection; and I once more repeat it, candidly and honestly."

"How much am I obliged to you for your friendly assistance, sir! Many thanks—many thanks, Mr. Scott. Good morning, good morning."

"Good morning, good morning, dear madam; but pray not a word about obligation.—Ha!—take care how you go down; for, to speak honestly and candidly, this is rather a dark staircase."

Oh, those pestilent hooks of conversation by which your prosy talker holds on!—by whose nefarious aid he wrings from you two irretrievable hours of your limited existence, in exchange for his two minutes'-worth of matter!

"As I have already told you," for the tenth time, says he, forcibly holding you by the arm.

"Then, plague upon you! wherefore tell it me again? Is it that you fancy yourself so enchantingly lively, or me so impenetrably dull, as that once telling is insufficient?"

"But I must once more repeat—"

"On what compulsion *must* you? You have encored yourself nine times already. I am sinking under an oppression of the brain, encumbered with the ton-and-a-half of useless words you have heaped upon it. I can endure no more—penknife, poker, pistol, are at hand—another 'repeat,' and I commit bore-icide upon you, here upon the spot."

Had Methuselah been condemned to receive the visit of one such proser a-day throughout his long life—! for any valuable use he could have made of it, he might as well have been cut off at the premature age of two hundred and fifty!

Now it is far from our intention to insinuate that either of the parties in question belonged to that dreadful class—those Thugs of social life!—the time-stranglers. But in matters of business (*only?*) ladies will have their "tithe of talk;" for they are not easily persuaded that business, whether it be the selecting of a ribbon or the settlement of a jointure, can be well done unless it occupy much time in the doing: hence Miss St. Egremont's frequent repetitions and re-questionings.

For the gentleman. As an act of self-justice he could do no less than endeavour to impress upon the lady how greatly he was serving her by consenting to take upon himself the unwelcome and onerous trust of her property; while, at the same time, he considered himself bound in "candour and honesty," to remove from her mind even the shadow of the shade of a doubt of her own prudence in accepting the service. This will excuse *his* travelling the same ground over and over again; nay, as our friend Sir Gog Cheshire would

express it, "In short, d—d over and over again, my lady."

Upon Harry Scott, though the junior partner in the firm, devolved almost the entire management of its affairs, for Mr. Whobble was old, and seldom visited the counting-house. But the confidence placed in Scott by his senior was fully warranted, for Scott was known to be a steady, thorough man of business—from ten o'clock till five. After that hour he disposed of his time in any manner he chose: he had an unquestionable right so to do.

Harry Scott's profits from the concern were computed at a thousand a-year—eight hundred at the least—of which, from his well-known inexpensive habits he could not spend much more than the half.

He was at no expense for house-rent; he was allowed apartments in the house of business, in which he lived—sometimes.

He kept only one hunter and a hack, and prudently drove nothing but a tilbury. Out of his income, he, as a single man, could very well afford that. He must allow himself *some* sort of recreation, and he knew to a shilling the cost of it.

He was never known to give a dinner-party in Birch-in-lane: by that economy, therefore, there was so much money saved. To be sure, he did once in every ten days, *or so*, invite a few friends to dine with him at Stevens's or Long's; but as he always prudently limited his outlay to thirty shillings, *or so*, a-head, why, out of his income, he could very well afford that. Besides, a man of business must allow himself some sort of pleasure after the labours of the day.

He had a snug, quiet little establishment *somewhere*; but as that could not cost him more than four hundred a-year, *or so*, why, out of an income of a thousand he could very well afford that. Moreover, that was almost the largest item of his expenditure.

He delighted in a game of *vingt-un*, or unlimited

loo ; but, as a prudent man, he never would play higher than half-crown fish. What if he should rise a loser of twenty or thirty pounds? To a man of a thousand a-year that was a trifle ; besides, upon the next occasion he might be a winner of double as much. Occasionally, also, he liked a little hazard or *rouge-et-noir*. None of these amusements, however, were accounted as amongst his *expenses*, for the year's end might find him a gainer by them ; if otherwise, it was altogether against the doctrine of chances that his losses should be such as to injure a man of a thousand a-year.

The prudent Harry Scott had never in his life been the owner of a race-horse. This was a fact well known to those who knew him best. Indeed, he concerned himself in no way about the turf, except by having a few trifling bets upon every great race that was run. Upon the Derby, though, he always had a regular "book;" but this was formed upon such accurate calculations (for herein was Harry considered to be a "knowing one") that, although it might win him a fortune, he could not possibly lose by it more than the value of its paper—*or so*. Such counter-chances as a lamed horse or a levanting creditor, are accidents unheard of.

Taken for all in all, then, of city junior partners Harry Scott was the very Phoenix !

And now, as Miss St. Egremont requires time to return home to Surrey-street, we will allow her for that purpose the whole interval between the present and the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER XXX.

Mrs. Fleecer's proposed Method of treating Bankrupt Bankers, with a passing Reflection thereupon—The Tea-party in Surrey-street—Our Hero plays "*The Agreeable Rattle*:"—"Brisk as a Flea and Ignorant as Dirt:"—*Colman*—A Cat-astrophe—"He made a good End on't!" *Shakspeare*.

"WHOBBLE and Scott," said Mrs. Fleecer, musingly ; "Whobble *and* Scott. Um!—well, my dear, if you will you will, and there is no more to be said about it. But I hold up both hands against it, remember that."

"Psha ! nonsense !" said Miss St. Egremont, "they are as safe as the Bank. Besides, hadn't poor Tom the greatest confidence in them?"

"Confidence, indeed !" said Mrs. Fleecer, "what ! when it is all you have got to depend upon in the world ? In such a case I wouldn't trust—no—not even the Pope of Rome himself. But remember ! I have cautioned you ; and if anything *should* happen, then who'll say, 'I'm sorry I didn't take poor, foolish Fleecer's advice ?'"

"Now, Fleecer," said Miss St. Egremont, laughingly, "are you not one of those amiable people who would delight in the occurrence of the calamity you predict, even though your best friend were ruined by it, just that it might convince the world of your wonderful penetration and foresight ? I can fancy with what exultation you would say to every one you might meet, 'Well ; I told her so—I told her how it would be : but she wouldn't follow my advice.'"

"Oh, pooh !" said Fleecer, impatiently, "you know me better than that." And she continued with vehemence—"Tell *me* of confidence, indeed. There

was my poor, dear, dead-and-gone captain—the stupid fool! I could tear his eyes out when I think of it—didn't he, though I dinned it into his ears, morning, noon, and night, not to do it—didn't he, with *his* confidence, go and place half what we were worth in the world with Messrs. Ducks, Drakes, and Diddler, the great bankers, as he called them? There were they with their town-houses, and country-houses, and carriages; and their wives with their diamonds and opera-boxes, and Lord knows what besides; and all as proud as so many Lucifers, looking down upon the rest of the world as if they were not good enough to breathe the same air with them,—and what was the end of it all? *Smash*, as I said t'other day—fourpence-halfpenny in the pound; and there were we half-ruined. Turned out that they never had had a guinea they could honestly call their own to bless themselves with; and all this finery, and show, and splendour, and high living paid for with other people's money. Poor widows and orphans, and old folks who thought they had made themselves comfortable for the rest of their lives, losing their all, and left destitute beggars; hard-working, honest tradespeople reduced to bankruptcy; while they all the while had been—the villains!—I can't call them anything better—the villains! Oh, Norey" (and as her indignation increased, she rose from her seat and paced the room), "I only wish I was a man and an M.P.! Wouldn't I go and take out an Act of Parliament, at a minute's notice, to make such doings hanging-matters, ay, and on a gibbet twice as high as for a poor devil who forges a one pound-note, or steals forty shillings, and does no great mischief to anybody, after all. But in a case like that of Ducks, Drakes, and Diddler, I do say, and I'll defy anybody to contradict me, that—"

Rat-tat-tat!

"Bless my soul, there's Mr. Quiddy! And, yet, it can't be, for it is only half-past five."

She listened; and the little maid of all-work, violently

slamming the street-door, was heard, in not the best-humoured tone, to say—

“Next door—botheration! As if a poor girl hadn’t trouble enough to answer the knocker for them as belongs to it.”

“Well, Fleecer,” said Honoria, “I’m not sorry for the interruption, or, what you would have done with those poor unfortunate bankers, it is frightful to think of.”

“Oh, don’t tell me: hanging is too good for them—with their speculations in *this*, and their speculations in *’other*, and all with other folks’ money. If things turn out right, it’s all very well; if not, *then* where are you? *Cash* with them, indeed! *smash* with them I call it. And I *will* say—”

“Say what you please, Fleecer, but don’t be in such a pucker about it,” said Honoria, laughing. “Now just look at yourself in the glass, and see in what a state you have put your beautiful head-dress by your violent agitation.”

It must be mentioned that, in order to receive her distinguished guest becomingly, the lady had put on the finest of her finery. She had dressed *at* her own portrait, which has already been described, and endeavoured to make herself as faithful a likeness of it as certain changes of circumstances would permit.

“Well,” said she, looking at the glass, “I declare if my turband isn’t all awry! and, there—my favourite ringlet nearly come off! What a mercy that knock was not Mr. Q.!”

Whilst employed in “repairing damages,” and doing something to her cheeks (but what that was we will not venture to surmise), with a little piece of a pinkish-coloured cotton which she took from her pocket, she continued to talk, but less vehemently than before.

“No, no, Norey, my dear; Whobble and Scott may be very good, but don’t you trust them—at all events, don’t place all your eggs in one basket. Bad enough

as it was for us with them Ducks and Co., where should we have been if we had placed *all* there? When I think of the villains, I am ready to—oh! I only wish *I* had the management of matters: I'll just tell you what *I'd* do. Before I'd allow a pack of people to set up as bankers to take care of other people's money, I'd have 'em taken up before the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or the Master of the Mint, or somebody of that like, and make 'em show how much they'd got of their own to begin with. Well; *that—I'd—take*; and I'd go to the Bank-director, and I'd tell him to take care of that, and just lock it up in their iron chest as *some* security for poor innocent people who might be kidnapped, as my F. and me was, by those villains, Ducks, Drakes, and Diddler, for villains I protest they—"

"Now, Fleecer," said Miss St Egremont, "you are growing warm again, so look once more to your turban and ringlets. As to my matters, leave me to manage them: I shall do nothing inconsiderately."

"Well, I only speak for your good; but I'll say no more about it at present," said the other, who by this time had re-arranged her head-dress and resumed her seat.

With respect to Mrs. Fleecer's proposed method of treating "people who would set up as bankers to take care of other people's money," though (like Hamlet's conversation with Ophelia) "it lacked form a little," in substance, perhaps, it is not so outrageously foolish a notion as might have been expected from a simple lodging-house-keeper. But admitting the case as stated by her against Ducks, Drakes, and Diddler to be true (though we will ask, *Did, or does, such a case ever occur?*): admitting their daring speculations with the funds of others—their reckless extravagance of expenditure without adequate means of their own to support it: admitting the misery they inflict, the irretrievable

ruin they entail upon their confiding dupes by their failure ; admitting all this, we, nevertheless, are of opinion that Mrs. Fleecer, when she proposes to hang *them*, who are considered merely “unfortunate,” *twice* as high as the petty forger or the paltry thief who are denounced as “felons,” she proposes a punishment which is too severe———*by half*.

“A thought strikes me,” said Fleecer. “I’ll ask Mr. Qiddy what *he* thinks of your city friends. No doubt he knows them.”

“I desire you will do no such thing,” said Miss St. Egremont ; “nor will I permit you to speak to him in any manner concerning my affairs.”

“Well, then, I won’t. But, Norey, dear—now, do—I have asked you twenty times already this afternoon—do stay and tea with us. What harm can it do you ? You can go up-stairs as soon as you are tired of him.”

“Well,” said Miss St. Egremont, “anything is better than to be so teased—I’ll stay.”

“Now that’s a darling girl,” said the delighted Fleecer ; adding, with some hesitation, “and suppose we—it would look handsomer—suppose—eh, dear ?—we tea up stairs in the drawing-room ?”

“No, thank’e,” said the other : “*here* he is your visitor, in my apartments he would probably consider himself as mine.”

A double knock was again heard.

“That *must* be Mr. Q.,” said Mrs. Fleecer. She half opened the parlour-door and whispered to the maid who was proceeding along the narrow passage—

“Betty—Betty—light the candle in the hall-lamp before you open the street-door.”

In this short interval Miss St. Egremont had jumped up and run to the looking-glass ; and having rapidly passed her fingers over her hair and the upper parts of her dress, she hastily resumed her seat.

Now we really believe that she was not in the

slightest degree anxious to make an impression upon the visitor : the act was involuntary : it was not in woman's nature to be avoided ; for, though not desirous to please,

“ One would not, sure, be frightful,”

under any circumstances.

Our hero was ushered into the room. Finding Miss St. Egremont of the party, he was both glad and sorry : sorry because her presence would deprive him of the opportunity of “ pumping ” the elder lady, as he had intended to do ; glad because he had never felt more in the humour to make himself “ uncommon agreeable ”—and this exploit he resolved to perform.

After an exchange of the salutations usual upon occasions such as the present, Mrs. Fleecer pointed to an arm-chair at the fireside, opposite to Miss St. Egremont, and politely begged her visitor to be seated and make himself comfortable—a kind of request with which the gentleman was never slow of compliance. A conversation, in which Miss St. Egremont took but little part, then ensued, upon those inexhaustible and ever-interesting subjects, the perceptible difference in the length of the days, and the state of the weather for the some time past, the present, and the likely to come ; Mrs. Fleecer asserting her conviction that there would be rain to-morrow—a prognostication which she had derived from no less indubitable an authority than a corn, which, to her, was “ as good as a weather-glass.”

“ And now, miss, will it be agreeable to you to have tea ? ” said she, addressing the younger lady respectfully, as she always did in the presence of a third person.

“ Whenever you please, mem,” was the reply.

Hereupon Mrs. Fleecer drew from her pocket a huge bunch of keys of various sizes (“ enough to weigh a royal merchant down ”), from which, as if by instinct,

she at once selected that which opened her tea-caddy. Having made the tea, she rang the bell, and upon the servant obeying the summons, she addressed her in the words, or, rather, *the word*, which formed the perplexing postscript to her note of invitation to her visitor—

"Muffins."

"It's all right, then," cried he, in a tone of satisfaction, and slapping his hands together.

"Sir!" exclaimed both the ladies at the same time, astonished at the abruptness and seeming causelessness of his exclamation.

"Ho, ho, ho! I beg your pardon, ladies; I dare say you'll think me vastly stupid; but when I read that word 'muffins' in your note, my dear good lady, it made me feel uncommon queer."

"I'm sorry, sir, you don't like them," said Mrs. Fleccer, rather displeased at the apparent failure of this delicate attention on her part; adding, "however, you can have—"

"Oh dear, no; quite the *contrary*," said Quiddy; "it was on your account, miss, for it set me thinking of you."

"Of me, sir!" said Honoria, unable to suppress a laugh; "upon my word, I don't know that I ought to feel greatly flattered, nor can I in the least understand *how* you could have associated in your mind me and—"

"Exactly so, miss; it turns out to have been my mistake. The fact is, I was afraid, upon first reading it, that you had took offence at my little compliment; and I wouldn't, I assure you"—(placing his left hand on his right side, bowing, and accompanying these gestures with a look intended to be killingly tender)—"I wouldn't offend *you* for twenty pound."

"Thank'e, sir, for your very flattering estimation of me," said the lady, drily. "Still I can't perceive what possible connexion there is between—"

"Oh dear, as it turns out to be all right," said he, "it isn't worth talking about." And finding that he did not improve in his attempt at explanation as he proceeded in it, he adroitly turned the conversation by addressing himself to Mrs. Fleecer, and a party whom to praise and caress is never ill policy—the cat.

"Charming cat of yours, Mrs. Fleecer. Here, puss, puss, pussy, come to me, puss : charming cat, indeed !"

But pussy, not duly appreciating the honour of his acquaintance, most pointedly rejected his overtures, and went and lay down close at her mistress's feet ; thinking in her own mind, "Charming ! sorry, good sir, I can't honestly return the compliment."

"Quite evident, marm, that cat doesn't at all like me," said Quiddy.

"She is very shy of strangers, sir," said Mrs. Fleecer.

"And a cat of excellent taste and discernment," thought Miss St. Egremont.

A huge plate of muffins was brought in, and Quiddy speedily satisfied the sensitive mind of his entertainer that her delicate attention to him in this respect was *not* a failure.

Quiddy was assiduous in his attentions to Miss St. Egremont, handing her her teacup and again rising to receive it from her ; and, in the other lady's opinion, at least, was chatty and agreeable in the extreme. He roved from topic to topic with marvellous grace and facility, nor was he at a loss what next to say much oftener than once in every five minutes. We cannot with truth assert that he roved "from grave to gay, from lively to severe ;" for as it was his cue to *amuse* the ladies, he confined himself to the lighter subjects of conversation. Yet was he not uninformative withal. He informed them that the grasshopper, the emblem of industry, at the top of the steeple of the Royal Exchange, was the coat-of-arms of Sir Thomas Grecian,

its founderer ; that the four statutes in one of the courts of the Bank represented the four points of the compass,—that is to say, Europe, Asia, Africa, and America ; that the statutes of Gog and Magog were in his opinion the most wonderful things in the city—not things four or five feet tall, but real statutes at large, as he believed things of that size were called.

“I suppose you mean they are colossal,” said Miss St. Egremont, smiling.

“No, miss,” replied he, “they are giants.”

“I have never seen them, sir,” said the lady ; “are they in bronze?”

“Oh dear, no,” replied he, exultingly ; “as a citizen, I’m proud to say they are in Guildhall !”

He next evinced his taste and judgment by declaring his opinion that St. Paul’s was “an uncommon pretty building,” taking it for granted the ladies had seen that.

“It is indeed a noble edifice, sir,” said Miss St. Egremont ; “it is an enduring monument to the architect’s glory.”

“Monument ! Begging your pardon, miss,” said he (with a polite bow to excuse his correction of her mistake), “St. Paul’s has nothing to do with the Monument ; *that’s* on Fish-street Hill, and is quite a different sort of thing. There’s a curious little anecdote about St. Paul’s, ladies : built by Sir Godfrey Webster, when labour cost only a penny a day. Better times to live in for paying than receiving—ho, ho, ho !”

“I never,” said Miss St. Egremont (with her eyes fixed musingly on the fire, and thinking aloud rather than addressing the observation to him), “I never can look at that stupendous dome, majestically rising into the air, without experiencing a sensation of awe—without wondering at the power that raised it—without asking myself, ‘How could it possibly have come there—where did it come from ?’”

“Why, miss,” said Quiddy, “I *have* heard it said

that it came from Rome ; that Sir What's-his-name took it from St. Peter's. Ho, ho, ho ! if that's true, we wish St. Peter's may get it back again ! But we don't believe such nonsensical stories nowadays. Something like the giants at Guildhall coming down to dinner when they hear the clock strike one, eh, Mrs. Fleecer ? Ho, ho, ho !"

"Ha ! ha ! ha ! Ridiculous !" responded Mrs. Fleecer ; "but, for my part, I never did much believe that !"

"Well !" mentally exclaimed Honoria ; meaning thereby what will be very well understood without our explanation.

The blunders, the gross, the almost grotesque ignorance of our hero, or (to speak gently and most respectfully, as it is our humble duty to do, of a man of wealth in whatsoever way acquired), let us call it *the want of accurate information* displayed by Phineas Quiddy, *Esquire*, in the conversation we have here recorded, may by some persons be considered incredible, *real as it is*. But let us ask, would they have doubted the truth of a single one of its points had this same conversation occurred in the days of plain Phineas Quiddy, the scrubby tobacconist of Cow-lane, Shoreditch ? We will take leave to answer for them, No. Information, knowledge of facts and things, are (like learning) not intuitive : they must be acquired ; and his means of acquisition in any matters, save matters of money, had been few or none. He looked into no books, as it has already been said, but his account-books ; and having read the births, marriages, and deaths, the commercial and police-reports, and (when such occurred) the particulars of an "interesting" murder, in a daily newspaper, he *wasted* no more of his valuable time in reading. What he at first was, such, therefore, did he remain. In manner only was he changed. Instead of *cringing*, *sneaking*, *servile*, and vulgar, he was now *pompous*, *swaggering*, *insolently condescending*, and vulgar. Arrogant and overbearing was he also where he durst to

be. There be some—many—who from beginnings unpromising as his, have risen to opulence and distinction; but, blest with minds, feelings, and tastes superior to, and far different from our hero's, they confer honour upon the station which they have achieved. But with them we have nothing here to do. Our business is with the Phineas Quiddys of the world.

"I'm astonished, miss," said Quiddy, resuming the subject, "I'm astonished you never saw Guildhall! I can only say—you—if I—if you would allow me, I should be uncommon proud to be your *chopperoon*, as Lady Cheshire calls it."

"You are very good, sir," replied Honoria, coldly, and in a tone which so clearly implied, "I positively reject your offer," that Mrs. Fleecer said—

"But why not, Nore—Miss S.? I'm sure you want *something* to divert your mind; and as you talk of going to Whob—"

A look from Miss St. Egremont cut the speaker short in the middle of the word; and the "—ble and Scott," like *Macbeth's* "Amen," stuck in her throat. But having gone thus far, and for doing which, little as it was, she doubted not to receive a rebuke hereafter, she resolved that, "being in for it," she would not stop midway in the matter, and accordingly proceeded with marked emphasis—

"And as you talk of going to the *Bank*, the day after to-morrow, why, you'll be close to it."

"To the *Bank*?" eagerly exclaimed Quiddy (while ten thousand thoughts, or pounds, flashed across his mind)—"close to it, miss; and I shall be *most* happy to—"

"You must permit me to decline your offer, sir," replied the lady addressed, and in a manner which precluded a renewal of the gallant invitation.

Quiddy, disconcerted by this pointed rebuff, was for a short time silent; at length, for want of something better, he said—

"I believe you know my friends, Sir Gog Cheshire and her ladyship, miss?"

"I have heard of them, sir," was Miss St. Egremont's reply.

"Ah!—yes—to be sure you must, miss. It was there I made acquaintance with your—your uncle. And do you know—I can't help saying—I hope you won't be offended, but, really, I look upon that day as an uncommon lucky one to me, miss."

"As how, sir? And why do you apprehend I should be offended at your saying so?" inquired she.

"I say lucky, miss, because you may thank—that is, I may thank that day for the honour of the happiness of making your acquaintance, miss. It was there your uncle gave me the invitation to come and dine at the cottage, miss."

"Um!" muttered Mrs. Fleecer, with a slight nod of approbation, at the same time thinking to herself, "not so very bad, upon my word."

Miss St. Egremont returned the pretty compliment by a bow, which was really civil, and, thus encouraged, the gay and lively visitor rattled on—

"And an uncommon pleasant day it was, miss; never passed a pleasanter day in my life. Capital dinner—as good a dinner as ever I'd wish to sit down to. Uncommon pleasant party! Eight altogether, I think. Let me see. First of all, there was me and you and Mr. Slymore—that's three; Mr. Hancock, four; Mr. Scott, five—"

"Scott?" said Mrs. Fleecer, eagerly interrupting him; "Mr. *Harry* Scott? *you* know him then, do you, sir?" and she cast a look at her fair lodger which distinctly meant, "Now, see how cleverly I have done it."

"Why, ma'am, I never met him to speak to him but that once; but I know him, if you mean the *house*, Whobble and Scott."

"Exactly so, sir," replied the inquirer; continuing

with affected indifference, "Very well thought of in the city?—*tolerable*, eh, sir?"

"*Tolerable*, ma'am! Whobble and Scott? First house in their line t'other side of Temple-bar. Never did business with them myself; but that's their character, and I always give people their due."

Hereupon the fair lodger returned a look to her landlady which conveyed its meaning as distinctly as that which she had received—"Now what say you to your doubts and suspicions?"

Her spirits, somewhat elevated by this satisfactory information, as also by the triumph it afforded her over her friend—for what woman delights not in a triumph, how small soever it be!—Honorina did what hitherto she had felt no inclination to do—she led the conversation.

"I believe, sir," said she, "Lady Cheshire has several daughters?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am—miss, I mean—several; but only three unmarried."

"Are they handsome, sir?" continued she.

"Why, miss, that's all matter of taste," replied he. "What's one man's meat is another man's *pison*, as the saying is, but they are not at all to my liking."

"Too old for you, I suppose, sir," continued she, laughingly.

"Quite the *contrary*, miss: why, the oldest isn't more than six-or-seven-and-twenty, and, for my part, I don't like such very young *gals*."

"Mrs. Fleecer," said Miss St. Egremont, "I dare say Mr. Quiddy will take another cup of tea."

"Thank'ee, miss; with all my'art. Besides, they are not tall enough for my money.—Hem! *I* like a fine, showy woman," added he, emboldened by the perceptible change in the lady's manner; a change which he considered to be not unfavourable to him.

"A little flattery sometimes does well," says Shakespeare. It certainly did no harm in the present case.

Now we are not anxious for *improvements* upon the text of the gentle bard : this, not from any misgiving as to our own capability, or mistrust in the powers of many other "ingenious commentators," to render it a great deal better ; but because, moderate in our desires—of a taste little fastidious—moreover, seeing no good reason why Shakspeare should have thrown upon posterity the trouble of "touching up" his trifling productions, we are willing generally to receive the text as we find it. Notwithstanding, we have here an emendation to offer.

For "sometimes does well" we propose to read, "does well ninety-nine times in every hundred." The passage as thus altered leaves nothing to be desired, and we have no hesitation in asserting that the author thus wrote it.

There, Sir Editor the Next ! there's an example of emendatorial humility for you !

"And Lady Cheshire," said Honoria ; "what sort of person is she, Mr. Quiddy ?"

"Why, miss," replied Quiddy, "she must have been a fine 'oman in her time, but she's old now."

"Old, is she ? What may be her age ?" continued she, dropping both the "Mr. Quiddy," and the formal "sir"—a circumstance which the observant gentleman interpreted to his own advantage.

"Why, miss," replied he, at the same time turning to Mrs. Fleecer, and looking her full in the face, "I should think she must be as old—as old as—"

More suddenly, and with greater haste than the occasion seemed to require, Mrs. Fleecer poured some milk into a saucer, and, stooping down, gave it to the cat, with a "Here, pussy, pussy, pussy."

"——At least, she's not very young, as I was going to say."

Dexterous enough," thought both the ladies ; "but it is *not* what you were going to say."

"*Was* very intimate with them," continued he, "but

have withdrawn my account from the house, miss; ho! ho! ho!"

"Done *what*?" inquired she.

"Cut the concern, miss; given up the acquaintance."

"Lor, Mr. Quidy, what could that have been about?" inquired Mrs. Fleecer.

"Why—I—in short, it was about you, miss."

"Me, sir!" exclaimed Honoria, with reasonable astonishment, not unmixed with alarm.

"Why, miss, I—the fact is, her ladyship is so uncommon envious—can't bear to hear any one praised but herself. I happened to say I had the honour to meet you at the play, and—a—I couldn't help saying—(now I hope you won't be offended)—says I, 'My lady, I,'—in short, miss, I could *not* help saying, 'my lady'—(and here he grinned and looked sheepishly into his half-emptied teacup)—'my lady, Miss St. Egremont is an *uncommon* 'andsome young lady.' And thereupon her ladyship took huff. There, miss—that's it."

"Really, Mr. Quidy, you are too complimentary," said Miss St. Egremont, accompanying the words with a gracious smile.

Now let it not be inferred from this, that the young lady's dislike of the visitor was *much* diminished; but—here was the "little flattery" again. Quidy, however, thought himself on the high-road to success. But his joy was a little depressed by what followed.

"But I am sorry, sir, that I should have been the cause of a disagreement between you and your friends;" gravely adding, "and considering my very slight acquaintance with you, certainly not pleased that you should have made me the subject of your conversation in any manner amongst persons whom I have no knowledge of."

"Pooh! fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Mrs. Fleecer, forgetting, but instantly recollecting herself—"Begging your pardon, Miss S.—I think Mr. Quidy behaved very much like the gentleman."

"Oh, marm"—said Quidy, returning a bow for the compliment. "But that wasn't the only cause, miss, so pray, don't be offended. The fact is, her ladyship wanted to saddle me with one of her daughters. *In short*, I might have had either of them for the asking"—["Delicate-minded creature," thought Honoria]—"and with plenty of money, too, miss, *plenty*; but I'm not the man to marry for money. Thank my stars, I've got a few thousands or so of my own, and all made by sheer industry."

"Well, that *is* something to boast of indeed, sir," said Mrs. Fleecer; adding, with a laugh, "and I suppose you are so much taken up with business you have no time to think of marrying at all."

"Quite the *contrary*, my dear good madam," replied he; "but, as I said, money is no object to me with my fortune; and when I marry—"

This he said in so sentimental a tone, that Mrs. Fleecer was correct in thus concluding the sentence for him—

"It will be all for love. Ah! Mr. Quidy: take my word for it, in marriage there is no true happiness without it."

And, with an expression of tenderness she looked at the miniature of the departed captain which was dangling at her waist.

Now Mrs. Fleecer's notions of what constitutes true happiness in the holy and blessed state of matrimony, must have been of a very liberal character; for it was well known to all the neighbourhood that the gallant captain of the Bermondsey Volunteers, who had heroically vowed to give the French a sound drubbing if ever he should have the good fortune to be opposed to them, was (perhaps by way of qualifying himself for that exploit) exceedingly industrious in the preliminary practice of drubbing his wife.

"Quite right, Mrs. F.," said Quidy; "quite right: no true happiness without it; 'all for love' is my motto.

Everybody likes money, *in* course : that's natural ; but as to marrying for it—! I wouldn't marry Pluto—no—not Cræsus herself, with all her money, if I didn't love her."

Respectable and respected shade of the excellent Widow Sanderson (formerly of Cow-lane, Shoreditch), what hast thou to say to this ! Spirit of the good, the kind, the gentle Janet Gr—— But let us not profane her memory by coupling thoughts of her with him.

"Now I like you for that, sir," said Mrs. Fleecer ; "that's so noble, so generous ! But it is just what I expected of you."

"I flatter myself, marm," said Quiddy, hesitatingly, and with an expression of countenance ludicrously tender, "I flatter myself I've got an 'art. I could make a wife 'appy, for I've plenty of money to do it with."

All this, though addressed *to* Mrs. Fleecer, was (we need hardly observe) spoken *at* Miss St. Egremont ; though the speaker durst not look her in the face.

At the commencement of the last speech, the latter lady took up a book, which she held so close to her eyes as to render it impossible for her to read it. For what purpose, then, could she have taken up the book ?

To his last observation there was no reply, and Quiddy for a moment was silent. At length he spoke.

"Fond of reading, miss?"

"Exceedingly, sir !"

"May I ask what book you are looking at, miss?"

"A volume of 'Hume's England,'" replied she.

"England—ah !—never heard of it. Do you call it a good thing, miss?"

"Sir !" exclaimed she, with astonishment. "The *history* of England—it is Hume's."

"Oh, miss," said Quiddy, accompanying the words with one of his politest bows, "I didn't mean to take the liberty to inquire who the book belongs to ; besides, I haven't the pleasure of knowing the gentleman."

"You would find him a very interesting acquaintance, if you did, sir," said Honoria, laughing. "But, seriously, Mr. Quiddy, have you never read the history of your own country?"

"Why, miss, I have not much time for reading," replied he. "I envy those that have: it must be a great pastime. However, when I get settled, I—do you know, Mrs. Fleecer, I wouldn't marry a woman, though she had millions, that wasn't fond of reading; it gives her such a domestic turn. I'm uncommon domestic myself, marm."

"I suppose," said Mrs. Fleecer, "glad to get him round again to what may be considered as *her* point, "I suppose that when you do marry it will be with the daughter of one of your city grandees—Ha! ha! ha! I dare say nothing less than the daughter of the Lord Mayor will suit you."

"Why, marm, as to that," replied Quiddy, with a sly look at the speaker—"mum—I say nothing. The present Lord Mayor has *two* daughters, *and* plenty of money.—Hem!—Ever see the Lord Mayor, miss?"

"Never enjoyed that honour, sir."

"Great creature!—hardly any pride—well worth seeing, miss." Then putting his hands into his pockets, and stretching his legs out to their full length, he added, in a tone of affected indifference—"Him and me's intimate."

"I believe his lordship is a linendraper," observed Honoria.

"By trade, miss—only by trade.—Well; P. Q. himself may be Lord Mayor one of these days. More unlooked-for ships than *that* come into harbour, Mrs. Fleecer."

"Why, surely," said that lady, "with your immense wealth you may naturally expect that one of these days—"

"Immense! No, no, my dear, good lady, not immense. I've nothing to complain of, but—In short, I'm above looking for money with a wife: and as to marrying

in the city, that won't do for me. The west-end for my money. A fine 'oman, accomplished, don't care if she hasn't a shilling—indeed I'd rather she hadn't ; all for love, say I again. No, no ; I'm for gentility, my kind, good lady, and that's the long and the short of it."

All this was too pointed to be misunderstood. To the elder lady it was highly satisfactory ; as, having once taken it into her head that a match between her fair friend and the amiable capitalist was a desirable thing, she resolved to avail herself of any means that might present themselves to "bring it about ;" and from Quiddy's declarations, and his manner of conducting himself, she conceived that she should meet with but few difficulties to encounter in so far as *he* was concerned. Touching, however, the other party indispensable to the perfecting of such an arrangement as that which she contemplated, she was less sanguine ; but since Miss St. Egremont did not openly manifest towards the visitor a positive repugnance, she hailed this circumstance, little as it was, as a "something ;" and wisely contenting herself with the reflection that "everything must have a beginning," she trusted to time, the chapter of accidents, and her own management, for the ultimate consummation of her wish.

With respect to the younger lady : of all that the gallant had uttered, she did not treat one word with the most remote approach to a serious consideration. For want of something better, however, to amuse—it amused her—the map of our hero's character, as it were, was spread open before her—and from the study of it she derived—pleasure ? no—entertainment. The emptiness, the insincerity of his declarations of disinterestedness she clearly saw through ; nor was Mrs. Fleecer herself completely deceived by them : he had "protested too much : " like an injudicious witness, he had damaged his own case by attempting to prove more than was necessary.

Honorina's intention had been to withdraw to her own apartment immediately after tea ; but, having nothing better, as we have said, to amuse her, she resolved to prolong her stay. This resolution she was presently compelled, by an untoward accident, to relinquish.

The great what-do-they-call-it, delighted at what he considered to be his successful opening of the siege of the fair one's heart ; vain of the masterly skill with which he made his approaches, and of the address, the exquisite tact which he had displayed—determined to secure the advantages which he doubted not he had obtained. To this end he resolved to make himself more and more agreeable : he was all life and spirits. We have already noticed that he was assiduous in the performance of the little duties of tea-table attendance ; he now redoubled his attentions, resisting Mrs. Fleecer's attempts to save him "the trouble," by constantly saying—

"Pardon me, dear good madam : trouble's a pleasure : P. Q. prides himself on being a ladies' man."

He had repeated and repeated his "wonder" that Miss St. Egremont had never seen the giants in Guildhall ; and, with importunity more than polite, reiterated his request that she would allow him the honour of showing her that interesting sight.

"Well, sir," at length said she, wearied by his entreaties, "at some future time, perhaps, I may—"

At this propitious moment the "ladies' man" jumped up to hand her the muffins ; and, stumbling over the cat, emptied the contents of the plate into Miss St. Egremont's lap.

Among the trials of Griselda, we do not remember whether the damage of a new black bombasin dress had place ; how that exemplary lady would have conducted herself under such a calamity, we, therefore, cannot say. But coupling the awful severity of its nature with the usual equanimity of Miss St. Egremont's temper, we incline to believe that, under similar

circumstances, the former lady would have comforted herself precisely as did Miss Honoria St. Egremont ; who, starting up from her chair and shaking the well-battered intruders from her dress, exclaimed,

“ How *intolerably* awkward ! A new dress gone for ever ! ”

And she bounced—No ; we withdraw the word (expressive though it be) preferring to describe the movement by a respectful periphrasis—and at a rate of walking considerably faster than she could have maintained had the distance been much greater, she quitted the room.

Quiddy looked amazingly foolish, hem’d and ha’d, stammered excuses and apologies, and (unobserved by Mrs. Fleecer) kicked the innocent cause of the accident. That was consistent with human nature. And (as is common in cases of hastily-formed friendships, hastily broken) the creature which, but a little while ago, had been the object of his violent admiration, the “ charming cat ”—though the cat was still in all respects, and without the slightest change in form, conduct, or character, the same identical cat—he now mentally denounced as the vilest and most detestable of all possible cats, past, present, or to come !

But, worst of all ! the benefit of the advances which he fancied he had made in the lady’s favour (advances, however, the extent of which his vanity led him very considerably to overrate) this unseemly accident might deprive him of : nothing more likely ; and equally likely was it that the heiress—offended, or disgusted, or both—might not consent to allow him an opportunity of reinstating himself in her good graces. Even looking upon the matter in the most favourable light, and hoping that she might condescend to honour him with another interview, what up-hill work would it be for him to regain the position he had lost ! The present he felt to be one of those cases in which it is far easier to *make* than to *mend*.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Fleecer was employed in picking

up the fragments of muffin, while, with a head-shake and a sigh, she muttered, "Thousand pities! thousand pities!" And then passed through her mind a thought, which assumed the very words spoken on a recent occasion by Sir Gog Cheshire—"Well, Q.; you've *done* it."

Presently a bell was heard, and, knowing it to be Miss St. Egremont's, she flew out of the room; hastily apologizing to her visitor for leaving him alone. In a few minutes she returned.

"Mr. Quiddy," said she, "I'm very—very sorry—I hope you'll excuse it—but, the truth is, Miss St. Egremont is so *very* unwell that—that—"

"I'm sorry for that, marm, uncommon sorry," stammered he, as he resumed his seat.

"I'm greatly disappointed, sir, for—for I thought we should have had a pleasant evening—a game of cards—but as she is so very unwell,—I'm sure you'll excuse it—some other evening, perhaps—"

Quiddy took the hint and rose.

"Well, marm," said he, somewhat sulkily, "I can't say but I'm disappointed *too*. As to some *other* evening, why—and as to that little accident—well—good night, marm. I hope Miss S. will soon be well again; nevertheless—Well—I suppose I must go half-price to the play: if I'd known it, though, I would have brought the new opera-glass I've been obliged to buy for myself."

"Oh, Mr. Quiddy," said she, taking his hand, while she held the street-door open for him, "think no more about that accident; it might have happened to anybody. She's the sweetest of tempers, and will have forgotten it by to-morrow. But when you consider that she has only worn the dress twice—! However, *there's more black bombasin to be had in the world.*" These last words were uttered pointedly.

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast!"

—a thought flashed across Quidy's mind, and, cordially shaking the lady's hand, he said—

“I *will* come some other evening, then. Pray make ten thousand apologies to Miss S. Good night, my dear good lady. As *you* say, there *is* more black bombasin in the world.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

The Philosophy of Mrs. Fleecer's Expedient for repairing an irreparably damaged Dress applied to irreparable Misfortunes generally—A short Appeal in behalf of good *Mother English*—A Cat, a Waiter, or even a Welsh Rabbit, may be useful as a Safety-valve for preventing a more mischievous Explosion of Ill-humour.

THE parties concerned in the preceding scene we may briefly dispose of for the remainder of the evening.

Few misfortunes, when calmly considered, are found to be totally incapable of alleviation. The truth of this remark is proved in the case of Miss St. Egremont's black bombasin. The new dress which she had despairingly condemned as “gone for ever,” having been submitted to the temperate examination of Mrs. Fleecer, that lady pronounced the damage to be so slight that a new “breadth” would make the gown altogether as good as new. But, as it happens with all those fortunate possessors of a misfortune, great or small, who delight in sympathy and condolence, and treat attempts at consolation as impertinence and want of feeling, Miss St. Egremont was offended and angry at the endeavours of her friend to reduce, in the smallest degree, the magnitude of the calamity which had befallen her. She would not be defrauded of one jot of the compassion which was her due. She would listen to no compromise with her grief. The accident was irremediable : it was as far beyond the power of

human ingenuity to repair, as of human nature patiently to endure.

But "time does wonders;" and, at the expiration of an hour, the irritation of the fair sufferer was so far allayed that she admitted, though reluctantly and with a deep-drawn sigh, that a "new breadth" might *perhaps* render the dress just wearable.

Now, if instead of unresistingly submitting to misfortunes, with hopeless acquiescence in the belief that they are unconquerable, we would resolutely set about to——But the moral is in Mrs. Fleece's expedient of the "new breadth."

That difficulty settled, the unlucky occasion of it became the subject of conversation.

"The awkward, awkward creature!" for the fortieth time exclaimed Honoria, as she threw the dress on the sofa.

"Now, indeed, Norey," said Mrs. Fleece, "it wasn't his fault, indeed it wasn't: it was the cat's."

"Ah! those unhappy cats," said the other lady, "those eternal bear-blames for clumsy servants and mischievous children. Not a piece of crockery is destroyed, not a tit-bit abstracted from the pantry, but 'the cat did it.' When a forgery is committed, or an old woman found with her head a mile away from her, I sometimes wonder we are not told that the cat was the culprit. If I were a cat, I am certain I should be driven to put a violent end to my life—hang myself by my own tail, perhaps."

And spite of her vexation, which had not yet entirely subsided, she laughed at her own conceit.

"Well, my dear," said the other, delighted at this indication of a favourable change in Honoria's humour; "well! no matter for whose fault it was, but you'll *see*—that's all."

"See! See what?" inquired Honoria, unable to comprehend the meaning of this mysterious announcement.

"Why, Norey, as he left the house," replied Mrs. Fleecer, "he said—to be sure I must do myself the justice to say *I* gave the hint, and a pretty broad one it was, I own; but you'll *see*; if not, I give him up."

"I hope your hint in no way concerned me?" said Honoria, sternly.

"No, dear, not *you*," hastily replied Mrs. Fleecer.

And there was a sufficiency of truth in the assertion to satisfy her conscience, inasmuch as Miss St. Egremont's black bombasin dress was not that lady herself.

"Whatever may be the pretty sight you promise me," said Honoria, laughing, "it certainly will not be your charming visitor: him I will not see again."

"Why, what a strange creature you are, Norey! I'm sure he was very agreeable—full of information; and you'll confess he amused you, for you laughed so!"

"Yes," said Honoria; "but there is a wide difference between laughing *with* and laughing *at*. As for his information—! Ha! ha! ha! There is some novelty in it, certainly. Amongst other instructive matters, I never heard till to-night that St. Paul's was built by Sir Godfrey Webster."

"There, then!" exclaimed Mrs. Fleecer, triumphantly; "no more didn't I: and but for him, perhaps, we never should have heard it. Yes, yes, my dear girl; believe me, there is more in him than you are willing to give him credit for."

"One point of information I am obliged to him for. Where are your suspicions about Whobble and Scott *now*, Fleecer?"

"Why—certainly—nevertheless—" stammered she, with natural unwillingness to confess herself to have been in the wrong; "however, we won't talk about that point to-night. But one thing is positive; he is taken with you. If ever I saw a man smit with a woman—why, every pretty thing he said was meant for you: he was making downright love to you, in his delicate way."

"In *his* delicate way, truly," said Honoria. "Why, every third word he uttered had some reference to money; and his protestations of disinterestedness were so grossly vehement that they betrayed their own insincerity. Making *love*, indeed! Make pure gold of that copper coal-scuttle. Why, he hasn't a grain of the true material in that insensible lump of gristle which he calls his 'art' to make it with. No, Fleecer; money is his single object. However, as I am not concerned about it one way or the other——"

"You are right about him in that respect, Norey," said Mrs. Fleecer, interrupting her; "and do you think *I* didn't see through him? Money *is* his object, and that's what I intend to build upon."

"That's what you intend to *build*, is it?" said Miss St. Egremont. "Now, once more, Fleecer—and, remember, I have told you the same thing twenty times already—if you dare to implicate me in any manner——"

But as we have already enjoyed the advantage of hearing the young lady's warning to the elder, touching her architectural project, once at least of those twenty times, we shall merely say that, upon the present occasion, it was repeated with undiminished force and solemnity.

Enter—the little maid with the supper-tray. So, good evening, ladies.

To our hero. Disappointed, discontented, and dispirited, he walked away. He recapitulated in his mind the occurrences of the evening. Oh! but for that fatal accident which brought his visit to an untimely end, happy Phineas, thrice happy Quiddy, had he been! The parting hint, the intelligible hint of his amiable entertainer, had inspired him with a momentary hope of recovering his lost ground, but that hope soon subsided. It was founded upon an experiment, the result of which might add to his discomfiture. In the pride of her heart the heiress might indignantly return

to him the peace-offering, and then what would be his position! The thought of such humiliation was unendurable. On the other hand she might retain it as a mere matter of right—as nothing more than a just compensation for the damage he had occasioned—holding herself at liberty at the same time to decline a future visit from him. In that case—and that case naturally suggested a reflection, which as naturally presented itself to his mind in the form of rule-of-three:—“If one yard of black bombasin cost —, how much will——?” And, alas! Miss St. Egremont was tall! In that case, then, he should have paid for the privilege of cutting a very foolish figure, more than that privilege is ever worth, cost as little as it may.

In order to get rid of the dismal remainder of the evening (rendered more dismal still by contrast with its agreeable commencement) Quiddy had intended to pass it in a theatre; but, occupied by his uncomfortable reflections, he found himself in Cheapside ere he well knew where he was. Being so near his home, he thought it hardly worth while to retrace his steps. Yet did he hesitate—he had a great mind—at Drury Lane a new farce, by a popular author, was to be acted for the first time—it was the very thing for his purpose—at home he had no cat to kick—and he was in such a humour! Fortunately, however, for the author, it began to rain, and Quiddy continued his walk homewards.

Were the wit and humour of Foote, Coleman, and Kenney combined to produce one little farce, which should besides be “*mounted*” with the utmost care, we should despair of its success did only five Quiddys, all in Quiddy’s present mood, “*assist*” in a crowded theatre at its performance!

“*Assist!*”—“*Mounted!*”

Now, surely, good Mother English has an intelligible tongue of her own to speak with. What need, then,

of such vile, new-fangled phrases ; such wishy-washy dilutions of French slip-slop ; such English run mad as “ *assist at a performance*,” “ *a piece well mounted*,” and hundreds of the kind that are daily put into her mouth ? Because it gives the old lady *a fashionable air*, is it ? Be it so ; but by Heavens ! the honest vernacular of Billingsgate is preferable to it.

Now observe the value of this short digression. Like the fiddling interval between the acts of a play, which enables the imagination to step at once from London to the Land’s End (or as much further as may be required of it), instead of stopping to change horses at every post-house on the road ; it gives us the power to skip over two entire hours—from nine o’clock, which was striking as Mr. Quiddy arrived at Bow-church, till eleven, when he went to bed—without detailing the manner in which he passed the intervening time. But for this contrivance, we should have been under the necessity of specifying several important *hours*. As for instance :—

How Mr. Quiddy in his very ill-humour, which prevented his seeing anything in the most agreeable* point of view, entered a small tavern in his neighbourhood, at which he occasionally regaled himself.

How he stormed at the waiter for not instantly bringing him the newspaper, which some other person happened to be reading.

How, after the lapse of two minutes, he, with offended dignity, inquired,

“ Do you know who I am, that I am kept waiting two hours for that newspaper ? ”

* Which, being interpreted, means *couleur de rose*. So you see “ we could and if we would.”

“ Calypso ne pouvait *console herself* du *departure* d’Ulysse.” Now how do you like that ? Yet that is precisely the sort of French in which Fénelon would have composed his “ *Télémaque*,” had he lived to imitate the present *fashionable* style of writing English.

How he ordered the waiter to put more coals upon the fire because the room was too cold.

How he next ordered the waiter to leave the door wide open because the room was too warm.

How everybody else present insisted that that order should not be obeyed.

How Quiddy quarrelled with everybody else, and desired to know whether they knew who he was.

How everybody else didn't care who he was and would have the door shut.

How Quiddy ordered a Welsh-rabbit and some ale for his supper.

How he abused the waiter because the cheese was too much toasted, the bread too little, and the ale was sour.

How the waiter civilly assured him that the Welsh-rabbit was made exactly as Mr. Quiddy had always desired his Welsh-rabbit should be made, and offered to change the ale if not approved of.

How Mr. Quiddy called the waiter an impudent rascal for contradicting a "gentleman," and swore that, "for his insolence," he would not give him the usual penny.

How that pretext was worth four farthings to him, because he thereby saved a penny.

How he sent for the landlord, and in the presence of all the company told him he never would come into his house again.

How the landlord, in the presence of all the company, replied that, not caring a button whether he did or not, he was welcome to stay away.

How all this did not put him into a better humour. And, lastly,

How, as the clock struck eleven, he found his best-beloved friend, Mr. Phineas Quiddy, in bed.

Now, if, instead of venting this immoderate quantity of ill-humour upon the landlord, the waiter, and the Welsh-rabbit, he had carried it with him into the theatre,

what might have been the fate of the new farce, though one of Kenney's best, and which to this day keeps its place on the stage—it is too frightful to think of!

Thus has a short digression carried us over two hours. But as we have now to take a leap over rather more than two-and-thirty—that is to say, to three o'clock of the afternoon of the day after to-morrow, at which time Miss St. Egremont has an appointment with Mr. Henry Scott—the period must be allowed to elapse between the conclusion of this present chapter and the commencement of—

CHAPTER XXXII.

Miss St. Egremont concludes an Important Affair—The Inestimable Advantage to a Lady in having a cautious Man of Business for her Friend—An Alarm.

* * * * *

“SHALL I read over the bond to you once more, Miss St. Egremont?” said Mr. Harry Scott.

“There is no occasion in the world for that, sir,” replied the lady; “I perfectly understand it. The bond is for twelve hundred pounds, which sum I may reclaim of you whenever I may have occasion for it, upon giving you three days’ notice.”

“Without any notice at all, if you choose—like a cheque on a banker. The three days’ notice is a mere matter of form; but in matters of business—in matters of business, my dear young lady, forms must be observed; for without such attention—without *such* attention, honestly and candidly, there is no security.”

“And I may draw half-yearly or quarterly, at my own convenience, for the interest; that also is clear,” said the lady.

“Not *interest*,” said Scott; “not *interest*, but for the *return* upon your money, which, at the rate of

eight *per cent.*, will produce you ninety-six pounds *per annum.*”

“Nine-six ! Come, now, Mr. Scott ; for the sake of making an even sum, cannot you say a hundred ?”

“Impossible,” said Scott ; adding with a laugh, “How little you ladies understand of matters of business ! Why, I should be rendering *myself*, positively liable for more than, in candour and honesty, I could ensure to you. Now I *do* ensure to you *eight per cent.* ; but beyond that, with certainty and safety, not one shilling could I. I *ensure* you that, mark me : but there may be times and occasions when——However, that is uncertain ; and, candidly and honestly, in matters of business there must be certainty—*certainty.*”

“I am delighted to hear you speak so, Mr. Scott ; it confirms my confidence in you. I hardly meant my proposal seriously : but, let me see—let me see—” (and she calculated in her mind),—“here is this cheque for twenty-seven pounds, fifteen shillings, and sevenpence——”

“Ay,” said Scott : “the surplus—the odd sum above the twelve hundred pounds produced by the sale of the stock.”

“Well, then,” continued Miss St. Egremont, “suppose that out of the loose money that I have at home—(and I have rather more by me than I have present occasion for)—suppose I were to make it up an even fifty, you could then, you know——”

“Miss St. Egremont,” gravely said Mr. Harry Scott (at the same time pushing himself a little back in his chair), “Miss St. Egremont, as I told you the other morning, candidly and honestly, you are the only person living for whom I would undertake such a trust as the present ; and you now compel me to add, honestly and candidly, that I must decline to increase my responsibility—that is to say, to undertake to employ, to *so very great an advantage to you*, a larger sum than I have already consented to——”

"I am wrong, sir," said Miss St. Egremont, interrupting him, "very wrong, to wish to trouble you further about my matters. I ought to be obliged to you, as indeed I sincerely am, for what you have so kindly undertaken to do for me. I will not press the point any further."

"Besides," said Scott,—“but, ha! ha! ha!—as I said before, you ladies understand so little of business—besides, any alteration in the arrangement *now* would require a fresh deed to be drawn—another stamp: and for such a trifle, why—Humph!—pardon the observation I am about to make, but I always speak candidly and honestly. Now, I must say that I do think you are unwise—pardon the word—but honestly and candidly speaking, I must say *unwise* to keep anything like a large sum of money in your possession; for so numerous, so frequent are the robberies committed in this great capital, that—not that I see the remotest chance of my employing it for you—but—”

“Oh, thank the Fates!” said Miss St. Egremont, laughing, “I am not encumbered with so much as to make me fear an attack of banditti; besides this cheque, not more than between fifty and sixty pounds.”

“Oh—ah!” said the junior partner, musingly; “why then, in that case, it would scarcely be worth while to—Why!—my dear Miss St. Egremont! what are you about?” exclaimed he, with apparent astonishment.

Miss St. Egremont had carefully folded the bond, and was about to put it into her pocket-book.

“Why, bless my soul!” continued he; “as I have already observed, in matters of business you ladies really are the—ha! ha! ha!—why the bond isn’t signed, and—pardon my laughing—ha! ha! ha!—and without my signature, properly witnessed, that bond, candidly *and* honestly, that bond wouldn’t be worth to you the paper it is written upon. Well! I don’t

wonder that ladies are so frequently imposed upon in matters of business."

"Dear me!" said Miss St. Egremont; "how very kind of you to remind me of the omission. Now, had I been in the hands of any one but a man of honour, what might not have been the consequence to me!"

"Ah!" said Scott, shaking his head at her and smiling—which "Ah!" thus illustrated, meant, "See what an escape you have had!"

At the same time he rose and rang the bell (for this interview took place in his private room), which summons was responded to by one of the clerks.

"Here, Mr. Stumps; be so good as to witness my signature to this bond," said Scott.

Mr. Stumps wrote "*Gregory Stumps*" in the proper place upon the paper; and appended to his signature a flourish which, if it did not add much to the security of the document, contributed greatly to its ornament. This done, Mr. Gregory Stumps quitted the room.

"There! *now*, madam, it is something like," said Mr. Scott, as he handed the paper to the lady.

"'Harry Scott—Gregory Stumps'—ay," said Miss St. Egremont, reading the signatures. "But pray, Mr. Scott, ought not Mr. Whobble also to sign this paper?"

"Whobble?—Mr. Whobble?—Oh, dear, no. Matters of this kind are not at all in his department. But I cannot help repeating it—ha! ha! ha!—in matters of business, ladies are so very—pardon the observation—so surprisingly—No, no; in our house, my dear Miss St. Egremont, each has his department to attend to—one partner never presumes to interfere with the department of the other. Without such an arrangement there would be no order, no regularity—and candidly and honestly, without the strictest regularity, there would be no—in short—"

And he abruptly turned the subject of conversation, by inquiring,

"By the by, have you answered that widow lady's advertisement?"

"I wrote to her immediately after I left you the other afternoon; and this morning's post brought me her answer," said the lady.

"Well?" said Scott, inquiringly.

"The terms are moderate," replied she; "but—there is a *but* in the case. However, I will take no steps in the affair without your advice—that is to say, if you will take the trouble to advise me—for I should wish in all things to be guided by you."

Mr. Scott placed his hand upon his heart, smiled, and bowed.

"Honestly and candidly," said he, "I am flattered beyond expression by your good opinion of me."

At the same time he received from the lady a letter, which, at her request, he read.

It was as follows:

"Starveleigh Cottage,
"near Pesterton, —shire.

"Madam,

"The fatal and unerring shaft of Death having, nine years ago, bereft me of a—ah! never too dearly beloved husband, the only joy and comfort of my, alas! now solitary life; my object in advertising is solely for the sake of the companionship of one who, being similarly circumstanced to myself, can sympathize with my unceasing grief; for, alas! alas! as I predicted in an elegy which I composed upon that but too melancholy event—

'My tears flow on, my tears will ever flow,
For oh! alas! no, ne'er can end my woe!'

That, then, being my only object, and my own income being all-sufficient for my widowed wants, my terms for board and lodging are only forty pounds a-year—extras, such as wine, washing, &c., not included.

"To-morrow (spirits permitting), I shall address

myself to your referee; and doubting not the reply will be satisfactory,

“ I am, madam,

“ Your obedient and

“ Heart-stricken servant,

“ NIOBE WOEFIELD.

“ P.S. Allow me to repeat, that the society of a sympathizing companion being my object, I trust you have a feeling heart, and that you will bring your own plate and linen with you.

“ To Mrs. Slymore,

“ No. 72, Surrey-street, in the Strand,

“ London.”

“ Quite a model-widow, I declare,” said Scott. “ ‘Nine years’—‘unceasing grief.’ A pleasant time she must have had of it!”

“ And that is the ‘*but*’ I have alluded to,” said Honoria; adding, with a laugh, “ though, as poor Slymore would have said, where there is such a perpetual flow of tears, a *butt* is indispensable. Now, if I am to be eternally regaled with Mrs. Niobe Woefield’s sorrows, a pleasant time *I* shall have of it!”

“ That is not likely,” said Scott, “ and the terms are really so——But stop—here is a ‘turn over:’”

“ Alas! I had nearly omitted to say, that the arrangement must be made for three months certain, and the first quarter be paid in advance.”

“ Um! Well,” said Scott, “ that is a trifle hardly worth consideration; and, as I was about to say, the terms are really so moderate, that I think the thing is worth an experiment. Only forty pounds; so you see, my dear madam, that of your income, such as, honestly and candidly, I am happy to say it *now* will be, you will be enabled to lay by no inconsiderable portion.”

“ You advise me to go, then, do you, Mr. Scott?”

“ Decidedly—*decidedly*,” replied he.

"But the lady has yet to write to you, and should she not be satisfied with—"

"No fear of that, my dear Miss St. Egremont, for I shall write of you—in short, candidly and honestly, *as you deserve.*"

These last three words the gentleman accompanied with a bow, and (as usual) the placing of his hand upon his candid and honest heart.

"Well, then," said Honoria, after a little reflection, "I will ; and having once made up my mind to it, why, the sooner I go the better. I have nothing to do in town," (adding, with a sigh, that seemed to contradict the assertion,) "and have no desire to remain in it."

"Quite of your opinion—quite," said Scott : "the sooner the better."

After many assurances from the gentleman that she would always find in him a firm friend, who would upon all occasions be but too happy to do anything and everything, even to the laying down of his life to serve her, Miss St. Egremont took her leave.

* * * * *

"Well," said Mrs. Fleecer, "what's done is done, so I'll say no more about it."

"So you have been saying for the last hour," said Honoria ; yet still you go on din, din, dinning."

"As to your going into the country," said the other, "why there's no great harm in your trying the experiment ; but take my word for it, you will soon enough be tired of that. As to the principal affair, I wouldn't have trusted fifty Whobbles and Scotts, not I. You have got a bond to be sure ; but then—"

"Why, bless my soul !" exclaimed Miss St. Egremont ; "how careless ! I declare I forgot to bring it away with me."

"What," cried, or rather screamed, the croaking lady ; "not bring it away with you ! Here's a pretty piece of work ! Mr. Harry Scott has only just to put it into the fire (and mark my words he will), and *then*

what is to become of you? Not even *that* to show for your money. Here—order a coach—go into the city immediately—I'll not rest till—"

"Pray do be quiet, Fleecer; I'm not in the least uneasy about it. He'll take care of it for me, and I'll go to-morrow."

"Take care of it, indeed! Yes, he'll take care of it with a vengeance! You'll never see that again. But I cautioned you from the very beginning; and if—"

The conversation was interrupted by Betty, who, entering the room, said—

"Please, miss, here's a gentleman as wants to see you particular."

"Is it that Mr. Quiddy?" inquired the lady thus addressed.

"No, miss; if you please it's a strange gentleman."

"Oh, very well, then; beg him to walk up."

The gentleman who walked up was Mr. Gregory Stumps. He gave Miss St. Egremont a sealed packet which Mr. Scott (he said) had desired him to deliver into her own hands. And Mr. Gregory Stumps, having faithfully executed his commission, made his bow and departed.

Upon opening the packet, it was found to contain the bond, together with a letter. Miss St. Egremont cast a triumphant look at her companion, who merely said—

"Well; it is more than I expected."

The letter ran thus:

"Birchin Lane,
"Five o'Clock.

"My dear Madam,

"I have the greatest pleasure in forwarding to you the *bond* which (pardon me for saying) you most *incautiously* omitted to take with you. Pray, pray, do permit me to entreat you to be more careful, more *cautious*, more CIRCUMSPECT in matters of business.

Had this occurred to you with certain parties I could name, the consequences to you might have been fatal; for, honestly and candidly, you would have been without the legal means of ever reclaiming your deposit. Fortunate for you is it that the accident happened with

“Your devoted servant and sincere friend,

HARRY SCOTT.

“To Miss St. Egremont.”

“The very soul of honour!” exclaimed Miss St. Egremont, as she placed the important paper in her writing-desk.

As the clock struck six the —— But what passed as the clock struck six we deem to be worthy of a chapter all to itself.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Being a Chapter which (for its Importance) is considerably longer than it looks.

As the clock struck six, the master of Long’s thus said to his head waiter :

“Mr. Harry Scott’s party all come?”

“Nine gentlemen besides himself, sir.”

“That’s right. Is the punch for his turtle iced to a nicety? You know he is uncommonly particular about that.”

“Yes, sir, it is.”

“And the champagne, Carter?”

“Six bottles in ice for him, sir.”

“Two Madeira and two Hock on table?”

“All right, sir.”

“Very well. And remember—one Port and one Burgundy with his cheese.”

“He found great fault with his Claret last time, sir.”

“Yes—I know. He is to try Mull and Mixem’s wine, the eighteen shilling claret, yellow corks; the same that Sir Archibald McSwizzle and Lord Earnest Fitzfuddleton always drink. Make no mistake about it.”

A waiter came leaping down-stairs, taking three at a time.

"Here—messenger—quick! Go to Mr. Scott's room—he wants you to carry a note home for him immediately."

"That's five shillings for me," said the messenger, as he bounded up-stairs. "I know my errand."

Mr. Harry Scott folded, addressed, and sealed a note. For a moment he quitted his friends to give his instructions to the messenger who was waiting outside the door.

"Now, Dick," said he, "take this note to my house. Be as quick as you can, and be sure you bring me an answer.—Have you got a safe pocket! There—that'll do. Be very careful of it, for it's of great importance."

Presently was heard Mr. Scott's bell, the signal that he was ready for dinner.

"Now, Carter," cried the master, "Mr. Scott's dinner. Look sharp, men—be nimble. Remember Mr. Scott is very particular about attendance."

We will now take the liberty to peep into the note which Mr. Harry Scott has just despatched "home to his house"—previously observing that any acquaintance of his who had heard his directions to the messenger, and then seen that functionary, on quitting the door of Long's hotel, turn to the right instead of the left (the way usually taken to Birchin-lane), would have thought the man a blunderer. But there was no mistake in the case. The note was addressed to—

MRS. SCOTT,

"Camellia Cottage, Bayswater.

And its contents were—

"Dear darling little duck of a Pipsey-Popsey,*

"I enclose two nice new fifties, fresh out of the Bank. Ain't they pretty things? Have nine fellows

* Pipsey-Popsey: *vice* Mary-Ann; for which endearing substitution (or something almost as pretty) Mr. Scott had Royal authority.

dining with me at Long's ; and as no doubt we shall sit late, and have a hard evening's work, I should like a quiet day to-morrow—so, have a nice little dinner ready at six. Am going to try some famous Claret—if approved of by our Committee of Taste, will order two or three dozen to be sent in the morning. Called at Rundell's on my way from the city—necklace wont be finished till Thursday. Wish I had taken Popsey's advice, and not gone to the club last night—lost forty-four at three-card loo. However, can't expect always to win ; and have a presentiment that I shall bang Madame Fortune to-night.

“ Adieu, darling duck,
H. S.”

“ Let me know that you receive this safely.”

Now, who will deny that “ of city junior-partners, Harry Scott was the very Phoenix !” And whoso shall inquire why we consider the seemingly small quantity of matter contained in this chapter as deserving of its own separate and particular niche, to him we reply, that in this short chapter is performed the work of ten long ones. But he must possess the faculty of drawing inferences, and of dealing largely with implications, or we shall be obliged to give him the ten long chapters after all.

* * We are reminded of the following conversation which occurred, *nearly word for word*, between the proprietor of a celebrated West-end tavern and his managing man :

“ Did Colonel —— dine here yesterday ?” (The colonel seldom left the house with less than six bottles.)

“ Yes, sir.”

“ I suppose he went away in his usual state ?”

“ Oh dear, no, sir ; quite sober : he did not drink anything, for he was going to wine with his cousin in

the Albany. He had only just a pint of Madeira at dinner, a bottle of Port with his cheese, and nothing in the world but one bottle of Claret afterwards."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Striking Coincidences : a *Digression*—Reparation and Gallantry by the yard—In what Manner it is received—An ingenious Proceeding, the effect of which is not yet shown.

AND, as the clock struck six—

Now let not what is to follow be considered as a forced attempt at a "Coincidence extraordinary!" For reflect that, in this our vast compound of brick and mortar, and stone and plaster, displayed, without exception, in forms of the most perfect architectural beauty, and which vast compound we call LONDON—the French call it *Londres*, an impertinence for which they deserve a severe reprimand, as, surely, we best know what is the proper name of our own unrivalled capital—reflect that there is hardly a minute of the four-and-twenty hours of each day of the year, at which identical minute circumstances, remarkable either for their curious resemblance or their striking contrast, do not occur.

For instance : An infant Roscius makes its first appearance on the World's stage at the precise moment when, on the opposite side of the way, a veteran, who for seventy-six years has acted in that great and complicated drama called "Life," is taking his final leave of the audience—his death-watch accompanied by the tinkling of a young lady's pianoforte, which is faintly heard from a room in the adjoining house !

The wailings of a family suddenly plunged into irretrievable ruin are drowned in the rattle of the carriages which throng to congratulate their next-door

neighbours upon their unexpected accession to a fortune!

After a hasty courtship, a happy couple are joined in wedlock, for so long as they both shall live; whilst, within the sound of the marriage-bells, an elopement is deliberately contriving!

The hands of the clock indicate the same second of time when Captain St. Orville and Lady Grace, who are "formed for each other," are vowing eternal constancy and affection; when Mr. Johnson and Miss Jones, who, for a similar reason, are similarly occupied; and when Sir Frederick Roverly and his lady (who also were "formed for each other") are, on account of incompatibility of temper and mutual dislike, within a twelvemonth of their happy union, delightedly signing articles of separation—the only act in which they ever had cordially agreed!

Bill Dixon has just given the finishing touch to his love-suit to Sally Green, by declaring that he never could consider a man "*as sich*" who would dare to raise his hand against a woman. At the same instant Bob Waters, who, before marriage, had used to declare himself "entirely of that 'ere opinion, and no mistake," is beating his wife!

But we are unconsciously rising in the solemnity and gravity of our illustrations; so we break off, lest these reflections incline us over much to melancholy—or to mirth.

Well, then: as the clock struck six, the very time at which preparations were a-foot for serving Mr. Harry Scott's dinner *in Bond-street*—mark that, ye hunters after strange coincidences!—Mrs. Fleecer, *in Surrey-street*, exclaimed—

"I *knew* what would come of it, and I told you so!"

But, stranger still! Mrs. Fleecer's exclamation had nothing to do with the proceeding in question; it was excited by the contents of a brown-paper parcel which

had just been delivered to her, and which she displayed on the table. The parcel contained a note also, which was addressed to herself, and enclosed another.

It will be observed that, in addressing the two ladies, the writer employed the two different forms of epistolary communication ; for what reason we know not, other than to show his facility in both.

Mrs. Fleecer eagerly read the note addressed to herself. Thus did it run :

“ Mr. Quiddy request the honour of Mrs. Fleecer to accept a few y^{ds} gingham, for a gown of the *newest* patron as a token of disinterested friendship which is not yet to be procured retail at the shops. Also entreat you will intersead with Miss S. for my accidental omission the other evening, for which he deeply regrets as soon as you can find a fav^{ble} opportunity for the same. Beg she will deliver enclose to her also !”

“ There, Norey,” said she (handing to her the enclosed note, which was addressed to her), “ there ; I knew he would do the handsome thing—and vastly like a gentleman has he done it !”

“ What accidental omission does the man mean ?” inquired Honoria, with a laugh.

“ How provoking you are !” replied the other. “ You seem determined to look upon everything he says and does in an unfavourable light. What omission *can* he mean but the accident to your dress. Sweet pattern gingham, indeed !” (adding, as she examined the texture of her present)—“ sweet pattern, but not over-fine. However, I had no right to expect even this ; and, as the saying is, one must not look a gift horse—”

“ Well ; let us see what your gallant has to say to *me*,” said Honoria. And she read as follows :

"Dear Miss S.

"I request you will condescend to accept 10 yds. $\frac{3}{4}$ of best blk. bomb" as a *mend* honourable as they say for my misfortune, which regret 20 times the more as it quite spilte my evening in the *pleasure* of your *delightful* company before it was $\frac{1}{2}$ over. Also take the liberty to offer 1000 apologys for the same, which *shall feel truly happy* if you will venture to allow me to hope you will place to credit of acc^t of

"Your h^{ble}. ser^t. to command,

"And respec^t. admirer,

"PHS. QUIDDY.

"P.S. May he hope for the *happiness* to pay her another visit when quite convenient to you. Your answer will oblige."

"Now, my dear," said Fleecer, "prejudice apart, what can a gentleman do more? And observe his delicacy—he calls his present only a *mend*, when, in fact, he has sent you enough to make a bran-new dress." Adding in a sort of mutter, "Nothing to spare, though, certainly.—By the by—"

This "by the by" was occasioned by a sudden thought. She hastily rose from her seat, and entirely unfolding the present *she* had received, she drew the material, portion by portion, from one end to the other, along the whole length of her outstretched arm, from the finger-tips to the shoulder. Having performed this evolution she looked musingly at the cloth, then upwards to the ceiling, and again at the cloth; and said,

"Ah!—well—no great matter—by a little cutting and contriving I *think* I shall be able to manage it."

Now what all this meant we are utterly at a loss to comprehend, and should be grateful to any lady who would take the trouble to enlighten us.

From the nature of his dealings the warerooms of Quiddy contained (as we have already seen) commodities

of almost every kind, and of which he became possessed at a cost not likely to be ruinous—to himself.

“Wilson,” said he, to one of his people, “I dare say you will find among the cut remnants of gingham, *ditto* black bomba—”

But as this happened yesterday, and, moreover, as it can have nothing to do with the case in question, we will say no more about it. So, for fear of lapsing into a digression—and (as it must now be universally known) digressions we uniformly repudiate—return we to Miss St. Egremont, who, while Mrs. Fleecer was occupied in the manner we have described, had opened her writing-desk and placed before herself a sheet of gilt-edged note-paper. Whilst employed in writing, she ejaculated at intervals—“Exceeding impertinence!”—“What a mind!”—“Shoppish note, too!”—“Credit of account!”—“Ha! ha! ha! really too laughable to be angry at;”—when, having finished her note, she read it aloud:—

“Miss St. Egremont has the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. Quidly’s note, together with its accompaniment. The latter, being superfluous, she returns to him with thanks for his polite attention. At the same time she requests Mr. Q. will dismiss any feeling of uneasiness he may still entertain concerning the very trifling circumstance to which he alludes.

“Miss St. E. being very busily engaged in preparations for leaving town she is under the necessity of declining altogether the proposed honour of Mr. Q.’s visit.”

“You are joking!” exclaimed Mrs. Fleecer, staring with astonishment; “you can’t mean to send him *that*! What! and return the bombasin *too*! Well—I declare!”

“I intend to do both,” replied Honoria; “though if I chose to accept a present from one who is all but a stranger, I might plead a sort of pretext for so doing.

But for you—though, of course, I have no control over you—I think it would be worth your while to consider whether—”

“Miss St. *Egremont*,” said Mrs. Fleecer, in as sneering a tone as she could venture to assume, “I flatter myself I have as much delicacy, as much *true* pride, as any woman *ought* to have : I want nobody’s advice how to act : I know what is right and proper to be done as well as you do ; so, as to that gingham, I am resolved to—”

“Ay,” said Honoria, approvingly.

“—*keep* it, to be sure. Do you think I would be so unfeeling as to insult a gentleman who has been so civil ? No, not for all the wealth of Jericho and Peru.”

And in proof of the sincerity of her declaration, she folded it up and carried it out of the room, muttering as she went,

“The proud creature !”

She was absent just long enough to allow time for Honoria to wrap up Mr. Quiddy’s present in a sheet of Mr. Quiddy’s own brown paper, and to tie the parcel with a piece of Mr. Quiddy’s own nice packthread. When she returned she found the “proud creature” in the act of writing that gallant gentleman’s name and address upon the package.

“Now, seriously, you don’t mean to be such a fool, Norey,” said Fleecer, who had recovered her good humour.

“Each is mistress of her own actions,” replied Honoria. “I am resolved to cut the disagreeable man’s acquaintance ; and unless his mind be as impenetrable as a stone wall, I have adopted a very intelligible mode of letting him know it.”

“Then there’s an end to all,” said Fleecer, with a sigh. “Ah !—I did hope—but no matter. Such a chance thrown away ! Well ; some people never see their own advantage. Had only to say the word, and you might have been the rich Mrs. Q. ! I know it,

for I saw it." Honoria's only reply to these regrets was a laugh.

"I'll send over the way for a porter, and return this at once," said she, taking up the parcel and rising to ring the bell.

"'Tisn't worth while to pay a porter," replied Mrs. Fleecer; "Betty has nothing to do, she can go with it."

"But 'tis pouring of rain," said Honoria.

"Well, dear, she can take the umbrella," said the considerate lodging-letter. "Besides, it will be a nice little walk for her. Poor thing! she doesn't often get out, and one *must* be a little indulgent to poor servants."

"I declare she shall not be sent out on such a night as this," said Honoria, unfeelingly resolved to deprive the girl of a little recreation. "To-morrow morning will be time enough."

"That will be best," said the other, "for I must send a note of thanks at the same time" (and, putting her hand to her forehead, added), "but I can't collect my ideas for writing, to-night."

The last speaker had two motives for approving of this delay: one was, that it would afford Miss St. Egremont opportunity for "thinking over" the matter, and probably altering her present determination; the other—but this is not exactly the proper place for explaining it.

There was a pause in the conversation, when Miss St. Egremont, who had been in thought, abruptly said—

"By the by," Fleecer, "I shall not encumber myself with many things. My pianoforte and the greater part of my books, for instance, I shall leave in your care."

"I don't understand you, dear," said the other.

"Why," said Honoria, "I shall take with me no more than what I may have immediately occasion for. If, after giving the place and the person a fair trial, I should resolve to remain, why—"

"Oh!" said Fleecer, "then you really mean to go?"
"Positively."

"*Positively*, my dear? Why, as yet you don't know whether that Mrs. what's-her-name—Mrs. Woefield—will consent to receive you," said Mrs. Fleecer.

"No doubt of that," said Honoria: "Mr. Scott's answer to her inquiries will be such as will make her but too happy to have me with her."

"Ah!—well—you will have your own way in all things, Norey; but I don't think it will do. Now, mark my words!"

"Well, then," said Honoria, "I can come back again. I shall be bound but for three months at the utmost, and need not stay even for that time if I don't like it."

"And when do you think of going, dear?" inquired Fleecer with a sigh.

"The very day after I receive the lady's letter," said Miss St. Egremont, "which will most likely be the day after to-morrow. The preparations for my journey may soon be made."

"Well, my dear child," said Fleecer, bursting into tears, "if you shouldn't like it—and I hope you wont—you'll know where to find a home. My house, like my heart, except my drawing-rooms, as I said before—for I can't afford to let you have them for nothing—my house, like my heart, will always be open to you. Ah! Norey; if you only wouldn't send back that bombasin and let *me* manage matters—"

"You are a good soul, Fleecer," said Honoria, kindly taking her hand, "but don't talk nonsense. But it is getting late, so let me make you *one* glass of nice warm negus, and then to bed."

"Well, I don't care if you do," was the not unexpected reply.

The ladies each took one glass; and when they rose to separate for the night, the elder lady's chamber-candle took light without offering the smallest resist-

ance, and she herself found the way to her bedroom without making the most distant approach to the kitchen-stairs.

The greater portion of this night was passed by Mrs. Fleecer awake. She could not sleep for thinking, "What a fool that girl is!" The affair with Harry Scott, although she did not like that, became one of small importance in comparison with the throwing away her chance in the great Quiddean lottery. Were it not for the girl's foolish delicacy she might be Lady-mayoreess one of these days. Marrying for love was all very well, if love happened to come hand in hand with money; but Norey was two-and-thirty, and ought to be above all that sort of nonsense. As for Mr. Quiddy, she clearly saw through *him*. There was no love on his side except for the ten thousand pounds which she herself had hinted and insinuated Honoria into the possession of: his motives were manifestly interested; and she should, therefore, feel not the slightest compunction in trapping him (such was the word that passed through her mind) into a marriage with her. This she doubted not she could accomplish without either much hurt to her fair friend's feelings or exposing her character to reproach. After all, he would have no great cause of complaint, for he would have a charming wife worth double the money.

But Mr. Quiddy's peace-offering in the shape of "10 yds. $\frac{3}{4}$ blk. bombⁿ!" To return that to him would be a fatal act; for, had the man but the spirit of a mouse, he never could brook so marked an affront.

"What a fool that girl is!" for the twentieth time thought she.

And thereupon she made up her mind to the course which had previously occurred to her, as the most proper to be adopted in that matter.

Now, however limited may be the circle of your friends and acquaintances, you cannot go on thinking and thinking what a fool—or anything worse, if you

please—such a one is, but sleep will overtake you at last, even though you select from amongst them your very best as a specimen. So did it happen to Mrs. Fleecer.

Notwithstanding her perturbed night, she rose early the next morning. In pursuance of the resolution she had formed, it was requisite that she should write a note to the great “What-do-they-call-it?” This, considering its object, required to be constructed with great ingenuity, and consequently (though brief as it was) it was the work of much time and consideration. At length, notwithstanding its difficulty, it was accomplished—as most things may be if you will earnestly set about them.

The ladies had finished breakfast, which was served in Mrs. Fleecer’s own little back-room.

“Once more,” reiterated Mrs. Fleecer, “let me entreat you not to do it.”

“You’ll worry me to death,” said Honoria. “I have made up my mind, and here is to put an end to all further question about it.”

She rose and rang for the servant, whom she desired *instantly* to fetch a porter. Presently the arrival of that fatal messenger was announced.

“Desire him to deliver that parcel as addressed,” said Honoria to Betty.

“And I have a note to send with it,” cried Mrs. Fleecer; who, starting up, seized the parcel, and hastened out of the room.

“Go with this note,” whispered she to the man; “and be sure you *don’t* wait for an answer.”

On her way back to her own room she went into the parlour, threw the parcel into a drawer of the side-board, and locking it, put the key into her pocket. This was the work of a moment.

“Ah, Norey!” said she, with a sigh, “now the thing is done it is of no use talking about it. But I must say I’m sorry for it.”

"No doubt," replied Honoria, laughing; "for there is an end to your hopes of seeing me Lady-mayoress."

Now let us see Mrs. Fleecer's note to Mr. Quiddy.

"Mr. Quiddy's most polite and very beautiful attention to *No. 72, Surrey-street*, was safely received last night, and gave great pleasure, and is accepted, with many many thanks.

"Mr. Q. will always be a most welcome visitor at all times, and hope and will be most happy to see him in a few days."

Now this note was so artfully framed, that while to the receiver it could hardly fail to be satisfactory, as appearing to express the sentiments of both ladies; Mrs. Fleecer might, at any time, exonerate Honoria (if need should be) from any participation in it. Had not the former *forgotten* to return Miss St. Egremont's share of the "very beautiful attention to *No. 72*,"—and if ever questioned upon the subject, "How she came to forget it" would, of course, be "the most unaccountable thing!"—the *house* would then have represented its mistress only, and Quiddy could not have been deceived by the equivoque. As it was—

But in what sense he did understand it is not to be related in the present chapter.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Flying Mercuries—Sickly Sympathetics—Our Hero is shown for the last Time in his Money-manufactory—The exquisite Adaptation of his Conduct to the Circumstances of the Case displayed: as the *Ladies' Man's*, to a *Woman*; as the *arrogant Man's*, to a *Lord*—Portrait in Little of Iscariot Hitch-flat, Attorney.

A CASE occurred which in the "Annals," "Memoirs," or "Lives and Times" of messengers, porters, errand-

boys and the like, stands perhaps without a parallel. The porter who was charged with the note in question happened to meet an acquaintance of his own profession who was on his way with a letter marked "*For immediate delivery.*" Upon exchanging a few words, it appeared (singular coincidence!) that they both were thirsty; and, although bearers of burdens, as neither of them professed to be an absolute camel for the patient endurance of thirst, that sensation, though felt in a very moderate degree, operated upon them as an uncontrollable necessity for drinking. Barclay and Perkins—the produce of whose true English Spa in Southwark, is a beverage more salutary than even the very nastiest of the waters that all Germany can produce, whatever cant, quackery, and affectation may say to the contrary,—Barclay and Perkins were at hand for their relief. To a snug corner of a quiet tap-room the friends betook themselves, and

“There did they beguile
Full many an idle hour with converse sweet,
Draining that time the not intemperate cup;
Till Sol, with ray askaunt and feebler grown,
Warn’d of their unaccomplished task the twain.
Straightways they rose, and each his path pursued
Divergent.”

How grave soever the consequences which may have resulted from a few hours’ delay in the delivery of the letter marked “immediate,” as they clearly were not matter for the consideration of the bearer, so need they not concern us. To be sure, a heart might have been breaking with anxiety for the receipt of it; or in that interval a step might have been taken, irrecoverable and fatal, which its purpose was to prevent.* What

* We can speak positively to an instance of this kind. It was occasioned by the roguery of the post-master in a French provincial town. Soon after the occurrence of this case it was discovered that he had long been in the habit of destroying letters upon which the postage had been paid to him, and pocketing the money. He was, thereupon, *sent to the galleys for life*—no child’s play of a punishment.

then? He knew not that, so what was his offence? He had merely stopped to have a little gossip with a friend; and for that a rebuke was punishment sufficient, and his promise to be "more careful in future" all the satisfaction that could reasonably be required of him.

But, Mr. Alderman Cantwell; and you, Mr. Deputy Twaddle; and you, O Sir Jacob Jolterhead Donkey! you, ye tender-hearted sympathizers with the "poor, misguided" murderer (unhappy "*victim!*") whose "error" was but a deed of barbarity and blood—no more: who send your ladies "elegantly attired" to witness his trial, and your lady-mayoreess to grace with her presence his last day's *devotions* (?) in the prison chapel: who water with your pitying tears his unmerited gibbet: plant on his gentle breast the "beautiful white camellia;" and in his last moments, whisper in his ear your pious hopes that he is "comfortable," "happy"—out upon you, ye drivellers! who, by your maudlin and ostentatious sympathy with the criminal, are the unconscious encouragers of crime! Make such a case as *this* your own:—Imagine the letter delayed contained an invitation (alas, too late!) to a turtle feast; and then, ye Donkeys, ye Twaddles, and ye Cantwells, *then* for your tender sympathies! *then* sit ye down and apportion the punishment to the offence! The lash? the prison? the hulks? Pshaw! too trifling all!*

Although the delay till late in the afternoon in the delivery to Mr. Quiddy (or, rather, at Mr. Quiddy's house) of the note which he ought to have received

* Shortly after that important event in English history, the knighting of that very foolish person—

"And pray, Sir Jolterhead," said a waggish acquaintance to him, "pray, Sir Jolterhead, what Order of Knighthood is it you have received: are you a knight-*banneret* or a knight-*errant*?"

After due consideration—

"Upon my word, now," replied he, "that's very odd—I never thought to inquire; but I believe I'm the usual sort of knight."

several hours earlier was to him the occasion of a severe disappointment : to ourselves it is far from being a subject of regret ; since it affords us, for the last time, an opportunity of observing how (in that interval) our hero was employed in his money-manufactory. It enables us, also, to exhibit him in two different points of view.

* * * * *

"Well?" with a look of intense anxiety, said Mrs. Fairfield to her husband as he entered the parlour.

His only answer was a deep-drawn sigh and a mournful shake of the head.

"What!" continued she, "will he grant *no* delay?"

"None, Mary; not a day. The silks and velvets he has got of mine are worth more, much more, than the six hundred pounds he lent me upon them; to say nothing of the lease of our house, and the bill-of-sale of the furniture, which he holds as additional security."

"But—Robert—did you tell him that within a month you will be able to—"

"I did; and showed him proof—*proof* that I could; but all to no purpose. Saturday is the day, and if I fail to meet his demand, all will be forfeit."

"He cannot have the heart to think of such a thing," said Mrs. Fairfield.

"Heart!" exclaimed he; "stone! iron! I believe he had rather I should fail in my payment at the very hour, than otherwise: he will get more money by it. That, indeed, is the way in which he has made his immense fortune. And what think you, Mary?" continued he, with indignation: "though I am as good a man as himself—better in some respects, I hope, though not so rich by a great deal—he did not even offer me a seat. No—there he sat stretched out in his easy-chair, reading a newspaper from which he scarcely took his eyes, and kept me standing all the while."

Mrs. Fairfield burst into tears.

"But did you offer him the fifty pounds you took with you as a set-off for the present?" inquired she.

"I did; but, said he, 'You mustn't talk to me about a set-off, mister; I must have the whole of my money on the very day; I have a large payment to make and can't do without it, for *I* can't satisfy people with a set-off, whatever *you* may think to do, mister.' Then, after appearing to think a little, he said, 'Howsomever, I am a-willing to assist you;—so, perhaps, for that fifty, as a *bonus*—though I can't say positive till I look to my banker's book—I might perhaps be able to allow you a month, though it would put me to uncommon inconvenience.'"

"I hope you didn't consent to make such a sacrifice, Robert?" said Mrs. Fairfield.

"No, my dear," replied he; "I fear at the first I sacrificed more for the accommodation than was quite prudent."

"Robert," said she, with hesitation, "Robert—did—did you tell him that I am expecting almost daily to be confined?—that our poor Margaret is ill?—that William is just recovering from a severe illness? and that if he should disturb us in the house just now the consequences might be—"

"I did, d—n him," replied he.

"And what said he to that, Robert?"

For a few seconds Fairfield paced up and down the room, and then exclaimed—

"Said! He said that was the old story when people wanted an excuse for not paying their debts—always sure to be a wife and half a dozen children sick at home—that he couldn't pay his debts with no such excuses—besides, that that was my affair, not his.—Mary—Mary—my fingers tingled to give him a drubbing. But I'm glad I didn't: it would only have made matters worse."

Without uttering a word in the way either of reply or observation, Mrs. Fairfield quitted the room.

Presently she returned in her bonnet and cloak, equipped for going out.

"Why, where are you going, my dear Mary?" inquired Fairfield, with astonishment.

"*I'll go to that hard man,*" replied she ; "perhaps he may grant to my entreaties what he denied to yours."

To this suggestion he strenuously objected, chiefly on the ground that he would not allow her to expose herself to insult or offence, which it was probable she might receive from Mr. Quiddy, considering the nature of the business about which she proposed to go. His objections she overruled ; a hackney-coach was sent for (for she was hardly well enough to walk), and she departed to fulfil her self-imposed and unpleasing task. Ere she quitted the room, her husband kissed her cheek, and, with a sigh, emphatically said,

"Ah ! my love, what do they suffer who are compelled to stoop to ask a service of a vulgar-minded man !"

Scarcely had the disappointed mercer carried his heavy heart out of the private counting-house of the arbiter of his fate, when a clerk delivered to the great man a letter. It was from Mr. Iscariot Hitchflat.

This person was an attorney of the lowest grade. As an *attorney*, the business that fell to his share was of that dirty kind which the more respectable members of the profession rejected. It was not the less profitable upon that account. But of late years he had chiefly been employed as a go-between for the negotiation of loans and discounts—the medium of communication between spendthrifts and usurers ; and so large a portion of his time was occupied in this pursuit that he had found it necessary to take a partner to assist him in the *law*-department of his affairs. These worthies now figured as Messrs. Hitchflat and Smutch, in Pettifog-row, Swallow-street—a portion of the town which, since that period, has yielded to the spirit of

improvement. With those pecuniary transactions, however, Smutch had no concern: they, with the entire profits accruing therefrom—a commission, or premium, of a clear *fifteen per cent.** upon the amount which passed from hand to hand—were Hitchflat's.

Thus ran that respectable practitioner's letter:—

“Pettifog Row,
“Tuesday, Mg. 11o'clk.

“Dear Sir,—My friend and principal, Lord Fitznoodle, having *instant* occasion for the 2000*l.* agrees to the terms—thought them rather stiff, but assured him that money is money just know—never knew it so difficult to raise. Will come with his lordship at 3 to-day, so please have the bill ready for his acceptance, *as understood*, together with the amount in *bank-notes*—looks better than a cheque. Title-deeds, to be lodged with you as security, *unexceptionable*.

“Yours, dear Sir,
“ISCARIOT HITCHFLAT.”

The terms of this transaction were to be greatly advantageous to the capitalist; and for the soundness of the security he trusted implicitly to the oft-tried care and circumspection of the agent. Without hesitation, therefore, he went to his bankers and drew the sum required, in order to prevent any unnecessary delay when his lordship should arrive.

Upon his return he resumed his easy chair, and for some time sat meditating on the manner in which he ought to receive a lordship. He had *seen* many, but he never yet had spoken to one. With the lord mayor, indeed, he was (as he had informed Miss St. Egremont) “intimate.” Yet he could not but admit the vast disparity between him who was so ceremoniously invested with the title on one ninth of

* This is no exaggeration.

November, and unceremoniously divested of it on the next, again to become the mere waxchandler or linen-draper ; and a real nobleman, a lord in right earnest, who when he should relinquish the title of Lord Fitznoodle, it would be to assume the higher one of Earl of Noodleton. There was as great a difference between them as between the stuffed lion in the Leverian museum and one of the living lions in the Tower : with the former he could be "intimate" and venture to give it a familiar pat ; but he could not presume to take any such liberty with the other.

He was interrupted in his reflections by Wilson, who came to inform him that a lady wished to speak to him. It instantly occurred to him that the lady must be Miss St. Egremont, who had come to thank him for his pretty present, and his still prettier letter. Upon this assumption he rose, and, drawing forward a chair for his visitor, desired Wilson to request Miss St. Egremont would do him the honour to walk in.

"The lady says her name is Fairfield, sir," said the clerk.

Quiddy looked sulkily, replaced the chair which he had drawn forward, and threw himself sprawlingly into his own.

"Oh—very well—tell the woman to come in," said he. "And, Wilson" (added he, with an air of importance), "I expect two gentlemen to pay me a visit at three o'clock—that's to say, one of them isn't a gentleman *but a lord* ; so be sure you show his lordship in to me *most respectful*."

It was presently known to every person in the house that a lord was coming to pay master a visit !

Quiddy took up the newspaper and pretended to read. Mrs. Fairfield timidly advanced a few paces into the room. She endeavoured to speak, but, somehow, she couldn't, her lips were parched—her courage failed her. Quiddy uttered not a word. At length

the silence was broken, if so it may be said, by a sigh from Mrs. Fairfield.

"Well, Mrs. What's-your-name," said he, without taking his eyes off the paper; "what is it *you* want?"

"Sir—I—sir—"

"Come, my good woman, if you have anything to say to me be quick, for I'm busy; besides, I am expecting my friend, Lord Fitznoodle, every minute."

"First, sir, I—I'm rather faint, and, if you'll allow me, I'll beg—I'll beg—"

"Oh, to be sure," said he, supposing he had guessed her meaning; "there's a bottle of water on the table; you can help yourself to some."

Mrs. Fairfield making no reply to this, Quiddy raised his eyes for a moment, and seeing that hers were directed towards a chair, he said,

"Oh—yes—you may sit down if you choose; but I shall be glad if you'll make short work of what you've got to say, for, as I have told you, I've no time to waste."

She took a seat, but still was unable to speak. He spoke for her.

"I suppose you are come about your husband's business? It's a bad piece of work. However, that's his affair, not mine; and that's all *I've* got to say about it."

"In that case, sir, we shall be ruined. But my husband has had dealings of the same kind with you before, sir; and, as he has always been punctual with you, we hope that—"

"Punctual, indeed! and pray, ma'am, where's the merit of that? In matters of business people *must* be punctual; I know *I* must; and for them as ain't there's such a thing as law—*law*, ma'am."

"A little forbearance, sir," said she, imploringly; "but a little, and you may rely upon it that all will be right."

"Now," said he, "as I suppose you've no more to

say than what your husband has said already, it's no use taking up my time. But this is always the way. When *men* can't carry their point, they send their wives to try what *they* can do. But that never answers with me, ma'am : I know too much of the world to mind that."

"You are mistaken, in our case at least, sir," said she, with somewhat of indignation, "Mr. Fairfield strongly objected to my making you this visit, but—"

"But it's of no use, you see ; so I must wish you good morning, my good woman."

As he said this he threw down the newspaper, turned his chair round to his desk, and, with his back towards her, began to write. The "good woman" could not patiently brook this ; she rose, and, though she could not repress her tears, she commanded her feelings sufficiently to address him with firmness.

"Mr. Quiddy, I must beg you will understand that this is a mode of address, a manner of treatment, I am totally unaccustomed to. My late father, sir, though ultimately unfortunate, had been a merchant of eminence in this city. I received an education such as became his daughter. I am the wife of a respectable tradesman. I—but it ought to be enough you should be reminded that *I am a woman*. Good morning, sir."

At this rebuke Quiddy's mean spirit quailed within him. He did not dare to look round at the speaker, but stooping his head till his nose nearly touched the paper he was writing upon, he stammered out—

"No offence, marm—I meant no offence, Mrs. F. ; yet when people come to ask favours I think they needn't be so uncommon nice. However, as I told Mr. F. I had no objection to allow him a month or so—and that's more than everybody would do—upon certain conditions—certain conditions, marm—why, that's my *ultra matrum*."

To this Mrs. Fairfield made no reply ; but with a

cold "Good morning, sir," she opened the door for herself and quitted the room.

And yet we have seen this same Mr. Quiddy upon occasions when he was "quite the ladies' man!"

How this affair terminated (as we do not intend to pay our hero another visit in his counting-house) we are not likely to know. Probably, however, poor Fairfield was compelled to comply with the "certain conditions;" probably this compliance saved his credit for a time; and probably again, he ultimately went the way of all those who in their difficulties desperately fly for succour to the Phineas Quiddys.

By-and-bye, a coroneted phaeton drove into Mark-lane. The vehicle was so high that its noble driver might easily have stepped from it in at one of the first-floor windows; but that course being unusual, he alighted, and, followed by Hitchflat, made his entry by the door. The clerks and warehousemen all bustled forward to obtain a view of the lord in his progress to Mr. Quiddy's private office. So also did that gentleman's domestic establishment of *servants*—for thus it was, whenever he had occasion to mention it, he spoke of one tall, stout, coarse girl, named Judy. Judy, however, bestowed her attention upon the wrong person, the attorney: and never after could she be persuaded but that the "tall, rosy-faced, swaggering one with the big bunch of seals to his long gold watch-chain, and the fine shirt-pin in his great frill, was the *lord*—as to the other, bless you! there was no fuss about *him*." To the others, the person of Hitchflat was known.

The instant his lordship's arrival was announced, Quiddy rose; and bowing, sidling, shuffling, and smirking, begged his "noble lordship" would condescend to do him the honour to be seated—at the same time presenting to him his own easy chair. The offer was accepted. Hitchflat also took a seat; but Quiddy for some time remained standing, accompanying every

second word he addressed to his "noble lordship" with an obsequious bow.

The attorney, at length, made a sign to him to take a chair, which he did. Quiddy looked at Hitchflat with astonishment and envy, for his manner towards Lord Fitznoodle was marked by a vulgar familiarity which was intended for ease. He was a useful tool to his lordship ; he knew it, and presumed accordingly.

Everything requisite to the transaction on foot having been prepared, the interview was brief. After some preliminary conversation Hitchflat said,

"Well, then, Mr. Quiddy ; I believe my friend, Lord Fitznoodle, has nothing to do but accept the bill and receive the money."

"That's all, Mr. Fitznoo—Mr. Hitchflat, I mean," stammered Quiddy, while handing the bill to him for his examination.

"Quite correct — perfectly correct — twenty-four hundred at six months," said Hitchflat, reading the document. Then placing it before Lord Fitznoodle, and giving him a pen, he continued, "There, Fitz, you have only to put your noble fist to that, and all's right."

"Fitz" despised his tool too much to be angry with him, or the noble fist would assuredly have been placed where it would have made an impression tending but little to Iscariot's personal comfort.

As "Fitz" was about to sign his name, Quiddy, unwilling to throw away even the semblance of additional security, said,

"May I presume to take the liberty to request your lordship will condescend to make it payable at your lordship's bankers, if perfectly agreeable to your noble lordship?"

"Oh, certainly," was the reply.

"May I be so bold as to ask with whom does your lordship keep cash?"

"With the Hoares," replied his lordship, with an air of indifference.

And he wrote across the bill—"Accepted, payable at Messrs. Hoares, Fitznoodle."

Quiddy took the bill and delivered to his lordship twenty notes of a hundred each. The latter while counting them, said,

"Two thousand for twenty-four hundred! Twenty per cent. interest for six months!* Sharp practice, Mr. Quinzy!"

"Beg pardon, your lordship," said Quiddy, eagerly; "not *interest*, my noble lord. I take no more than the *regular* interest: the rest is for commission and—and—so forth."

His lordship had folded up the notes, and was placing them in his pocket-book when Hitchflat said,

"Stop, my dear fellow, don't be in such a devilish hurry. Talking of commission, remember mine. Just hand me over three of those flimsies. Short reckonings, you know—eh, my boy?"

Without a reply, Lord Fitznoodle carelessly threw him the notes, and rose.

As his lordship approached the table on which stood the water-bottle, his back being towards the worthy pair, significant winks passed between them.

Quiddy perceiving that he was about to pour some of the water into a glass, exclaimed with a look of horror—

"Oh, my lord—pray, my lord—can't think of your noble lordship's drinking water; besides, that has been standing in the room all night. Permit me, my lord—condescend—a glass of wine, my lord—I've got a bottle open."

And with the rapidity of magic, he produced from a cupboard a bottle of wine and three glasses. Whilst filling them he continued—

"Water, indeed! no, no, my lord; that isn't the way we citizens show our hospitality. Here's to your lordship's very good health. Proud it has been in my

* Again, no exaggeration.

power to have the honour of putting your lordship under an obligation."

His lordship, with a stare of astonishment, looked the speaker full in the face.

"Obligation!—Commission—and so forth!" muttered he. "Mr. Hitchflat, I believe you are satisfied with the deeds I have given as security.—Obligation!"

"Perfectly, perfectly, my dear fellow," said the attorney. "And Mr. Quiddy, as we have settled this affair pleasantly, come and dine with me this afternoon." And he whispered in his ear, "You shall see that few of these nobs do that sort of thing better than Iscariot Hitchflat."

"With all the pleasure in life," replied Quiddy.

"And, Fitz, you'll join us to meet Mr. Quiddy, eh?"

"No," replied he.

"No!" exclaimed Hitchflat; "why, I know you have no other engagement."

"None in the world," coolly replied his lordship.

"Then what's the reason? your business is arranged, and—"

"*That's* the reason. Come.—Good morning, Mr. Quizzy." And as his lordship proceeded towards the door, he thought to himself, "These fellows make no distinction between *before* and *after*."

Quiddy took his hat in his hand, and, with many an obsequious bow, followed Lord Fitznoodle into the street.

The latter and his companion having remounted the phaeton, Quiddy said,

"My lord—begging your noble lordship's pardon—I'm in a great hurry to get to the west-end; and if your lordship would condescend to give me a lift—"

"West-end!" said his lordship, looking at him from head to foot, and laughing; "I can give you a cast as far as Temple Bar—the *city* side—but I can't drive you *through*. Get up behind with Ruggles."

The unconscious Quiddy thanked his lordship for his

extreme politeness, and scrambled up into the seat next to the servant. On the way, he overtook and met several persons of his acquaintance. All these, staring at his elevation, were honoured by him with a stiff nod—a nod of insolent condescension. Arrived at Temple Bar his lordship pulled up and Quiddy alighted. He had no sooner touched the ground than the carriage drove off; and Quiddy, waiting till it was out of sight, walked—no—strutted back to Mark-lane.

“Can’t stand your fixing your low-life *friends* upon me, at *any* rate,” said Lord Fitznoodle to the vulgar, upstart, but indispensable, attorney.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Approaching our Journey’s End we put on our Seven-league Boots—Our Hero slightly damaged, is treated with *great Care*—Again he passes an Evening in Surrey-street—“When Greek meets Greek then comes the Tug of War”—Quiddeian Charity—The Visit terminates pleasantly to the Parties concerned.

“GONE!” exclaimed Quiddy.

Now this is a specimen of the manner in which we intend to proceed from this point of our history to its termination. Passing over minute circumstances, unless they be such as may assist us in our main object, which is the illustration of the character of our hero: following no longer, link by link, the chain of events, we shall relate the more prominent only; still, however, with due regard to their intelligible connexion. We shall occasionally indulge in a long stride. Thus, a dash may supply the place of the less important parts of a long conversation, and a row of asterisks be made to represent the lapse of three weeks, or three months,

or haply as many, or more, years. How to designate this style of narrative we do not exactly know; but, for want of a better term, we will call it the Seven-league-boots style.

"Gone!" exclaimed Quiddy.

"Yes, sir," replied Mrs. Fleecer; "she has been gone these four days. To tell you the truth, Mr. Q., we wondered at your not calling, considering the note we sent you in return for your beautiful attention. Indeed we thought it very odd."

We need scarcely say that the "we" in each instance, ought to have been "I."

"I have been uncommon ill for a whole week, my dear good lady," said Quiddy, with a very rueful countenance; "and never once out of the house till this evening."

Poor dear! and what had ailed him? As we doubt whether he would truly tell you, we will.

He went, according to invitation, to dine with the worthy Hitchflat. There he had the honour of meeting three or four sprigs of fashion, all "clients," or, properly speaking, *victims* of his respectable entertainer. To them Quiddy was "capital fun." They made a "dead set" at him. They plied him copiously with wine; got him up to make speeches, the burden of all which was his "sheer industry," his "few thousands or so," and his power, "though only a commoner, to buy many a lord out and out." Then he grew pathetic, began to whimper, and rose (holding fast by the table) to propose as a toast, "The health of the l—lovely and b'u'ful heiress, Mi-Miss S'neggurmunt."

When they had nearly "done him up," they filled and refilled his glass with brandy; till, at length, in a state of utter insensibility, he rolled under the table. At one in the morning (the host being fast asleep in his chair) the party broke up. The young sprigs first

of all fastened to the collar of poor Phineas's coat a label :—

“ This coat is the property of Mr. Funniest Quiddy. The finder is requested to take it to his house in Mark-lane, where he will be handsomely rewarded for his trouble.

“ N.B. To be carried with great care, *as the owner is inside.*”

They next tied him neck and heels with a bell-rope, which they cut down for the purpose ; rolled him into a hackney-coach ; rode with him to Mark-lane ; and there, under a gateway, opposite his own door, they left him. Shortly after daybreak, the watchman of the neighbourhood, who was humanely provided with a box to sleep in throughout the night, awoke ; and happening to find him (still in a state of insensibility) delivered him agreeably to the directions.

Had Quiddy received Mrs. Fleecer's note in due time, he would certainly have availed himself of Lord Fitznoodle's polite conveyance to the west-end, and paid his visit to the ladies *then*—probably have endeavoured to prevail on his lordship *to set him down at their door !*—and thus have escaped his present disappointment. But as the note was not left at his house till after he had departed for Mr. Hitchflat's, the consequence was such as we have related.

In reply to Mrs. Fleecer's kind inquiry concerning the nature of his illness, he merely said that he had been invited the other day to meet his *friend*, Lord Fitznoodle, at a *gentleman's* house (concealing the fact that his lordship had declined the meeting) where, he believed, he had taken something that had not quite agreed with him. We should wonder if it had.

— — — — — “ And so you really think, marm, she is gone for good and all ?” continued Quiddy, with a sigh.

"That is *my* opinion," replied Mrs. Fleecer. "I hope your tea is to your liking, sir?"

"Uncommon good," replied Quiddy. "But, suppose she should not like the place, or the person she is gone to live with?"

"Little chance of that," said Mrs. Fleecer. "Never *was* a creature so easily satisfied. But then, such a sweet temper! I do believe," added she, with a laugh, "I do believe she would be happy with *Old Nick himself*, after a few days' acquaintance."

This additional observation was kindly intended to inspire *Quiddy himself* with hope.

"She is a charming 'oman," said Quiddy. "And yet I should have thought a London life would have suited her best."

"Oh, dear, no : she loves quiet and retirement—she is of such a domestic turn! And such a manager! Why, when poor Tom —— Ugh! ugh! ugh!—this nasty cough of mine!—Why, she had the entire management of her late uncle's house, and I'm sure she saved him hundreds upon hundreds by her care and economy. Ah! she's a perfect *numparelle*!"

"But, I suppose, my dear Mrs. F., she'll come to town sometimes?"

"Once or twice a-year, perhaps," replied she (drinking her tea, and, at the same time, looking at him from the corner of her eye); "when she comes to receive her *dividums*."

As she uttered the last word—"That look of his is enough for *me*," thought she.

—— ——— "I assure you it's my deal, Mr. Q., don't you remember you turned the Queen of Hearts last time?"

"So I did—beg pardon——I don't know what I'm thinking about."

"I *do*," thought the lady.

"If you don't like cards, Mr. Quiddy, pray don't play," said she.

"Like a game of cribbage, in this quiet way, of all things," said he.

"Are you fond of singing," inquired she.

"Fond of it, my good lady? dote on it, marm."

"Well then, sir, there will be a beautiful concert on Monday evening, and if you have no other engagement, I can let you have a ticket."

"Monday? no engagement in life," replied he; "and shall be uncommon thankful to you for it."

"It will be at the great rooms at Islington," continued she, "and under the patronage of Lord and Lady Upperpark—not that they will be there; but they have taken a dozen tickets, and allowed their names to be put up to give a fashion to the thing. It is for the benefit of Miss Hopsley, a *figurante* at Drury Lane, who has had the misfortune to break her leg. She has but eighteen shillings a-week, and out of that (besides paying for ribbons, silk-stockings, and dancing-shoes) she has herself, her two children, and her infirm old mother to support, poor girl!"

"Oh—a benefit! Ay—Monday? Let me see—you said Monday? Dear me, now I recollect myself I have a most particular engagement on Monday."

"Well, never mind that, Mr. Quiddy; you will not be obliged to go: the price of the ticket is only three-and-sixpence, and you will be doing a charity."

"Excuse me, marm; but I never encourage vice; and from what you say about *Miss Hopsley* and her children—"

"No more do I encourage vice," interposed the really kind-hearted Fleecer; "but Charity ought not to look so *close* at things; and when a poor girl is crippled and starving, *that* isn't exactly the time to—"

"As to charity, my dear good Mrs. F.," interposed Quiddy, in his turn, "I solemnly assure you, my charity, *as it is*, is unknown."

Mrs. Fleecer required no very solemn assurance of a fact which she was well inclined to believe.

"To be sure," continued he, "I never give to poor people in the streets, for that encourages idleness. No ; the good *I* do I do private, *and keep it all to myself.*" [This was strictly true.] "No, marm, there is no ostentation about me : you never see my name paraded in the lists of public charities."

"I must do you the justice to say I never did, sir," replied Mrs. Fleecer.

Quiddy bowed in return for the compliment.

—— ——— "That's my trick, Mr. Q., *I* played the ace. But I'm afraid you are thinking of anything but the game."

"Why, as I said a few minutes ago, she does run in my head uncommon, and that's the truth of it. Ho ! ho ! ho !"

"Ah, Mr. Quiddy, I'm afraid you're a gay deceiver," said the lady, smiling and shaking her head.

"Not I, marm, not I ; I'm a straightforward man ; no trick or deceit about P. Q. But, sorry to say there's an uncommon number of fortune-hunters about town. Miss S., with such a fortune as hers, ought to be very cautious. However"—(and he fixed his eyes scrutinizingly upon Mrs. Fleecer's)—"however, *in course*, her uncle took care to leave her fortune *well secured for her in the hands of steady trustees.*"

"Her uncle had too much confidence in her prudence to do that, sir." And emphatically she added, "No : *every shilling of her property is entirely at her own disposal.*—But, Lord bless me !—Oh dear ! what a careless tongue I have ! If Miss St. Egremont ever should know that I have been so indiscreet as to speak so freely about her affairs !—But, I'm sure, Mr. Quiddy, I may trust to your honour never to betray me."

"Close as wax, marm, close as wax." And, rubbing his hands together, he exclaimed, "Come, marm, I don't care if I do take that benefit-ticket, after all. It is but three-and-sixpence and it may do the poor devil of a girl good."

— — — “Well, once more, good night, Mrs. F. Now, remember your promise, to send my *kindest* remembrances to the charming Miss S. And as I said before, you may tell her, if you like, that I’m ready and willing to—”

“Come, don’t make a fool of yourself, Q.,” [It had already come to that !] said Fleecer, laughing, and gently putting him out at the street-door. “It is getting on for twelve o’clock, and here have you been gossiping ever since six !”

“Well, good night, marm.”

“Good night. Shall always be happy to see you when you have a mind to drop in in this quiet way.”

Quiddy had (as he thought) *entrapped* Mrs. Fleecer into the betrayal of a point of information, which he had been most anxious to obtain : Mrs. Fleecer had enjoyed an opportunity of sounding, to their lowest depths, the heart of Quiddy, his motives, his character, and his mind ; and both parties resolved to avail themselves (as best might serve their own purposes) of the advantages they had severally obtained.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A rural Retreat, a pleasant Companion, Board and Lodging, all for Forty Pounds a-year—*Extras not included.*

* * * * *

Miss St. Egremont to Mrs. Fleecer.

“Starveleigh Cottage,
“Near Pesterton—Tuesday, 16th.

“Dear Friend,

You complain that in neither of the three letters I have sent you since I have been here have I said one word about how I like my new residence. The truth is, I was unwilling to do so till I had given it a fair

trial, which I have now done, having been here a month this very day. You were in the right about it, Fleecer; and could I but have imagined——But, before I say more upon that subject, let me assure you that I did not write either of my two last in anger, as you seem to think. All I meant to say was, that though your intentions, so far as they regard me, are good (and of that I am satisfied), yet your conduct towards that hateful man is not strictly honourable. True, as you say, you never told him more than that I was *down* in poor Slymore's will for ten thousand pounds; and (in reply to a question of his) that my property is entirely at my own disposal, which, to quote your own words, 'is true, positive;'—(Oh! what a light that insidious question throws upon the man's motives!)—and so it is, inasmuch as I may withdraw it from Scott's hands at a moment's notice; but you must confess that you are drawing him into deceiving himself, which is little, if any better than a direct act of deception on your part towards him.

“‘Again sends his kindest remembrances,’ indeed! I wonder at his—I was about to say insolence, but *meanness* is the word. After my coldly returning his present to him, and such a note too, as I sent with it! By-the-bye, you have never told me what he said about it, for something he must have said. If anything could increase my dislike of him, it would be this grovelling conduct of his. But no matter, since I desire to hear no more about him. As for your many excellent schemes and contrivances, they are just so many excellent schemes and contrivances thrown away. And pray, now, attend to this—The horrid person may visit you seven times a-week instead of twice or thrice (as you say he does) for anything I care, so long as I have not the misfortune to be of the party; but if after this warning you advance one step in your present proceedings as concerning me, I shall have done with you *for ever*. I say this not angrily, but seriously—*most seriously*.

“And now to Starveleigh Cottage, *near* Pesterton, and Mrs. Niobe Woefield.

“*Near !—Cottage !* Didn’t you fancy (I did) a pretty little, isolated cottage-like building at a reasonable distance away from the town ? Well, then : the turnpike-gate on the London-road stands at the *very entrance* of the petty, paltry, gossiping town of Pesterton ; and *close* to the turnpike-gate, on the London side, stands a tall, narrow, red-bricked, three-storied, one-windowed house (the last of a row) with a poplar-tree, which rears its dismal head above the chimney-top, in front of the windows which it serves to darken. On the green door of this charming dwelling, is painted in white letters, STARVELEIGH COTTAGE.

“Oh, imagine my horror when the coach stopped at this cottage—(involuntarily did I think of the pretty place I had left in Lisson-grove !)—when I found the wheels were *near* Pesterton, and the horses’ heads, through the turnpike-gate, absolutely in the town itself !

“The door of the cottage opened to receive me ; and there stood a very tall, very thin, very lady-like, very much rouged, and very much black-ringleted woman of about five-and-forty. She was in deep mourning (not weeds) ; in one hand she held a white cambric handkerchief, and in the other a long black ribbon, at the end of which was a very fat, white, waddling poodle dog. Talk of rouge ! *you* are pretty well for that, my dear Fleecer ; but compared with Mrs. Woefield—a pale rose to a poppy !

“No sooner had I entered the dismal little parlour than she threw her arms round my neck (all cloaked and bonneted as I was) kissed me with rapture, deluged me with a flood of tears, and exclaimed,

“‘Oh, sweet friend ! this is delight, this is joy ! Alas ! this is the first truly happy moment I have enjoyed these nine years, since the fatal and unerring shaft of death bereft me of a, ah ! never too dearly be-

loved husband, the only joy and comfort of my, alas ! now solitary life !

"Somehow these words seemed familiar to me ; and afterwards upon referring to her letter, there, sure enough, they were to a tittle ! And a dull scholar must I have been if I had not soon got them by heart, for they are the set preface to almost everything she says.

" 'Come,' said she, sighing deeply, 'take off your things and sit down, and then I'll tell you my melancholy story.'

"Fatigued with my journey, instead of replying to this I said I should like some tea. She said she had taken *her* tea an hour ago, but that if I chose to have some made *on purpose*, I might, certainly. [Mark that, Fleecer.] Well ; I desired to have tea, and said that as I had taken nothing but a sandwich on the road, I should be glad to have something to eat with it. Being told there was nothing in the house but bread, for that she herself never took butter, I said I would have some bread and butter and a couple of eggs.

" 'Do you always take butter, sweet friend?' inquired she, drawing a deep sigh, as she does at every third word she speaks.

" 'Yes, ma'am,' replied I.

" 'Then, Nelly,' said she to the poor half-starved looking servant-maid, 'you had better get a pat of butter for Mrs. Slymore, and two eggs ; and at the same time go to Reams, the stationer, for a receipt-stamp for ten pounds. And, Nelly, as I am nearly out of tea, you may as well bring in an ounce.'

"A cold shiver came over me, and I thought of the *poetry* wickedly attributed to poor Sir Cecil Wray :—

"We buys our coals by th' peck that we
May have them fresh and fresh, d'ye see !"*

* Miss St. E. quotes the *Probationary Odes*. To the same unlucky quizzee (Sir C. W.), was also attributed the following couplet, upon his presenting to a lady a pair of shoes which had

"I went to look at my bedroom—small, inconvenient, ill-furnished : but, as a compensation for all this, it commands a charming view of the poplar which grows almost close up to the window. Mrs. Woefield then made tea for me, throwing the remains of dust in the caddy into the tea-pot, and adding thereunto a small spoonful from the fresh *stock*. Having done this she left the room, but presently returned and placed before me a receipt for ten pounds ; reminding me of the 'agreement' that the first quarter should be paid in advance. I thought this rather quick work, but said nothing, and gave her the money.

" 'Our little bill for extras, sweet friend,' said she (as usual with a sigh), 'we will settle weekly.'

"She appeared to wait impatiently till I had finished my tea, when she drew her chair close to mine, and bursting into tears, began, in a voice drest in deep mourning, if I may so express it—

" 'And now, sweet and sympathizing friend, I will tell you my melancholy story.—I was born of parents whose hearts were bound in one, and who doted on me with an affection, ah ! never to be exceeded. No wonder is it, then, that my heart, alas ! was early formed to' . . . [I give you merely the prominent points.] 'Scarcely had I attained my sixteenth year when, oh ! . . . The moon threw her pale light into my solitary chamber when, ah ! . . . 'Niobe !' cried he ; 'Augustus !' exclaimed I ; 'for, yes, my—'

"She stopped and inquired, 'Pray what's your name, Mrs. Slymore ?'

" 'Honoriam, ma'am,' replied I ; and she went back to

" 'Niobe !' cried he ; 'Augustus !' exclaimed I ; for yes, my Honoriam, 'twas Woefield's manly and symmetrical form . . . arrived at Gretna's wished-for

belonged to the Duchess of York, remarkable for the smallness of her foot :—

"Your humble servant and the muses,
Presents you with a pair of *shoeses*."

Green . . . roseate bonds of Hymen . . . parent's slow forgiveness . . . mother's blessing . . . Death, alas ! with his fatal and unerring shaft laid both, ah, me ! both parents in the cold and silent grave . . . marriage, oh ! too happy, too happy, ah !—But 'tis now nine years since the fatal and unerring shaft of death bereft me of a ah ! never too dearly beloved husband,' &c. &c.

“And this for nearly two hours, Fleecer, with oh's, ah's, and alas's innumerable ! The woman absolutely talks Minerva-library novels ; and seldom does she utter ten words upon the commonest subject but oh ! ah ! or alas ! is tacked to them. As for crying, she's at it twenty times a day ! Where her tears come from I know not. Well ; having finished *hers*, she said—

“‘And now, my Honoria, tell me *your* story.’

“‘Ma'am,’ said I, ‘I have no story to tell.’

“‘What ! and has not the fatal and unerring shaft of Death bereft you, like me, of a ah ! never too dearly beloved,’ &c.

“‘It is a subject I never talk about,’ said I.

“‘Are you not like me, then, wont to indulge in a sweet and soothing melancholy ?’

“‘No, ma'am,’ replied I ; ‘moreover, I resolutely keep *my* sorrows to myself.’

“‘Heavens !’ exclaimed she, ‘you astonish, you disappoint me. Are we not, then, to sympathize with each other's unceasing grief ?’

“At this point I, too, burst into tears, but it was from positive weariness, vexation, and impatience. Mistaking the cause, she threw her arms round my neck and wept.

“‘'Tis well, 'tis well,’ cried she ; ‘thus let us mingle our tears—thus pour our sorrows into each other's sympathetic bosom. O my Honoria ! soon will you find the joy, the delight, the comfort of grief. This, alas ! is the happiest moment I have known since the fatal and unerring’—and so forth.

“Presently she asked me if I was fond of poetry.

My answer being, unfortunately for me, in the affirmative, she took from the drawer a large writing-book nearly filled with *poetry* of her own composition, (to which she is continually adding,) and the general title of which is, 'Tears of the Heart'—oh! ah! alas! such stuff. This she not only asked me to read but, worse, to tell her my opinion of it; not only my opinion, but, worse, my *candid* opinion—and I am alive to tell it; in bed, I suffered nightmare: funeral processions interminable, passed across my chest. Then the whole tremendous weight was compressed, *aggravated*, into the unendurable load of one *very* small volume of 'Poems, *edited* by the Author of Twaddlededee.'—*This* awoke me. Next morning at breakfast—But I find my sheet is nearly full, so I will write again to-morrow.

"Yours, dear Fleecer,

"Very faithfully,

"HONORIA ST. E.

"P.S.—Remember my warning concerning your charming *new* and intimate acquaintance.

"2nd P.S.—I re-open this to beg you will send me down three yards of fine book-muslin for embroidering, —*by coach*, if you can't find a cheaper mode of sending it. I can't get such a thing, though there is one *whole* haberdasher's-shop in the *town*, as the people here call their Pesterton. And such a town! You know Stroud, near Rochester? Well, it is quite as ugly as that, and almost as dull as Worthing."

The Same to the Same.

"Wednesday, 17th—

"Dear F.

"I left off in mine of yesterday at the first morning's breakfast. I'll give you that as a sample.

A A 2

In the parlour sat Mrs. W., sighing, and writing *poetry*, with the fat poodle in her lap. The moment I entered she rose, threw her arms round my neck, began to cry, and welcomed me as her 'sister in affliction.' Lively, eh? We then sat down to breakfast—and such a breakfast! Stale bread, water discoloured by a few grains of tea, coarse brown sugar, and a very small quantity of well-watered milk. Thought it as well to come to an understanding at once, so told her that I always took my tea strong, was unused to brown sugar, desired to have some butter, an egg every morning, and added that I took *milk*. Hereupon the poor servant-girl was sent to get an egg, some butter, some loaf-sugar, and another halfpenny-worth of milk *for Mrs. Slymore*. She then requested that I would make the tea as much stronger as I chose, so in I put two additional spoonfuls. Noticing this, she said,

“‘I shall know what to do in future, sweet friend—*two* extra. Ah, me! Such is the delicate state of my nerves, owing, alas! to my unceasing grief, that strong tea would bring me to the grave, which I, like yourself, yearn after; for, oh! my afflicted sister in widowhood, none but women in our unfortunate situation can fully comprehend our feelings! Alas! how shocking is the—’

“‘Mrs. Woefield,’ said I, interrupting her, ‘pray don’t talk in that manner; you make me miserable. As to yearning after the grave, you are quite mistaken if you think I indulge in any such melancholy desires; and I am astonished that you, after the lapse of nine years, should—’

“‘Ah! my story, then, has made an impression on your feeling heart! You are truly the sympathizing companion I have so long, so vainly sought for. Yes, my Honoria, it *is* nine years since the fatal and unerring shaft—But here is Nelly with the loaf-sugar and butter. Ah, me! those and all such luxuries I have denied myself ever since the fatal and un—Alas!

Nelly, put down exactly what you have laid out, and bring me the account after breakfast !

"The *luxuries*, however, being on table, Mrs. Woelfield made no scruple in partaking of them. Breakfast no sooner ended than she opened what she called her poetry-book, in which I had found her writing. She had been composing (she told me) some verses on her meeting, *at last*, with a sympathizing companion (meaning me), and these she 'flattered herself,' were the 'sweetest' she had ever written ; but she would wait for my 'candid opinion !' There were about forty lines ; and such lines ! of all sorts and sizes, like a paper of mixed pins, (only that they were without *point*, as poor Tom would have said,) long and short, corkings and minikins jumbled altogether ! Holding her pocket-handkerchief in one hand, and one of my hands in the other, she recited them in a hollow, sepulchral voice—how many times would you think ? Only four ! I send you a few *pins* as a sample.

'The fatal shaft that laid my lamented low,
And left me, ah ! alas ! an inconsolable widow,
Thee, also, my afflicted Honoria, of thine bereft,
For us, therefore, there is only one consolation left,
And that is the charm of sympathy,
From morn till night exchanging sigh for sigh . . .
What joy, what pleasure, oh !
For our sad hearts is left, but unceasing woe ?
A joy which vulgar minds can never know . . .
Since, then, I've lost my Woelfield, thou thy Slymore,
Our tears let's never dry more.'

"I praised the *poetry* (Apollo, forgive me !) but at once resolved, in my own mind, not to enter into the lively compact proposed. But to finish this, which I call the sample-day. By and by, Mrs. W. asked me if I took lunch?—*She never did.* Replied, Nothing but a crust of bread or a biscuit. Supper?—*She never did.* Replied, Occasionally. What I drank at dinner?—*She took nothing but water.* Replied, Your table-beer,

if good ; if not, a glass of ale or porter : a glass of sherry or two afterwards.

“ ‘Wine,’ said she, with a deep sigh, ‘as I wrote to you, sweet friend, wine, washing, *et cætera*, are *extras*. But though table-beer is a thing I have denied myself ever since the fatal and unerring . . . yet *certainly* you are at liberty to have anything you choose. I live simply, my Honoria, very simply ; little is sufficient for my widowed wants ; and our melancholy situations being similar, so am I certain are our habits.’

“ ‘There was something in all this that sounded *odd* ; however, not quite understanding it, I made no reply. In the course of the morning I desired to have a crust of bread.

“ ‘Bring lunch *for Mrs. Slymore*,’ was Mrs. W.’s order to the maid.

“ ‘Dinner—Two small mutton-chops and a quantity of potatoes were placed on table. I was served with one, Mrs. W. took the other, helping herself abundantly to potatoes. Presently, said I,—‘Is there anything to follow the chop, ma’am?’

“ ‘No, sweet friend, but you see there are plenty of potatoes. As I told you, I live simply, and—’

“ ‘So do I, ma’am ; but I beg you will understand that I don’t live on potatoes.’

“ ‘Then, Nelly, dress the other chop ; what remains of it can be put by for to-morrow.’

“ ‘A large, coarse, untempting chop was brought, and of this I took a portion. Sure enough, the servant was desired to lock up the remains in the safe, together with ‘the potatoes,’ and bring her mistress the key.

“ ‘(The poor devil, observe, is on board, or, rather, *starvation* wages.)

“ ‘Do you take cheese, my Honoria ?—*I never do !*’

“ ‘Not always, but I will to-day.’

“ ‘Then, Nelly, go and get some cheese *for Mrs. Slymore*,’ said Madam Jeremiah, with her customary sigh.

“ ‘And,’ said I, ‘be so good as to bring a bottle of sherry for me—the best you can get. If I approve of it, I will order in a dozen. *I am unused to a chandler-shop style of dealing.*’

“ These last words I uttered pointedly, for I felt a little disgusted at what was going on.

“ Mrs. Woelfield took cheese, and a couple of glasses of wine which I offered her—the latter without the smallest reluctance, although it was a luxury from which she had abstained ever since the unerring-shaft affair. In the evening, the poetry-book, tea, tears, the story —— ! At half-past nine *my* supper (a crust of bread !) and to bed. And so ended the sample-day !

“ Next day, being in want of some small articles of perfumery, I inquired where I should find *a* perfumer. Was directed to the only perfumer’s-shop in the town, which turned out to be a *barber’s* shop. Having succeeded in *not* getting a single thing I wanted, I was going away, when the barber said—

“ ‘So, ma’am, you are the new lady that has come to lodge with Fatal Shaft?’

“ ‘Lodge with what!’ exclaimed I.

“ ‘Oh, ma’am,’ said he, ‘that’s the name Mrs. Woelfield goes by in Pesterton.’

“ And he rattled on :—

“ ‘I wish you joy of it, ma’am. If she doesn’t *cry* you out of the house the first week, she’ll *starve* you out the second ; if you stand it a month, you’ll be fit to be made a show of as a wonder. I never yet knew a lady that could. You are the fifth lodger she has trapped within these fourteen months ; and the last, though she came as plump as a partridge and as lively as a cricket, went away, before the end of three weeks, as thin as a weasel, and as melancholy as a mourning-coach—in short, our doctor here said it was a case of confirmed hydrophobia (or something of that sort), and that she’d never recover her spirits again. As to grief for the loss of her husband (a good enough sort of exciseman),

why, ma'am, poor Joy-and-Comfort (as she now calls him) and she lived like cat and dog, and she wears black only to save washing. There's no grief in the case; she began learning herself to cry when she was at boarding-school, because she read in some book or other that it was interesting; she can cry just when she likes; indeed she can't leave it off, for our doctor, here, says that, from long habit, it has become a natural *infirmity*. Why, it gives one a fit of the dysmoria to look at her. And I'll tell you a curious little anecdote, ma'am. Last fair-time two men were grinning against each other through horse-collars for half-a-crown. Well, the man to the right was as near winning as could be, when he happened to look at Fatal Shaft, who was in the crowd, and, as true as I'm standing here, if he didn't lose the wager! As for stinginess—the only person in all Pesterton she's a good customer to is the potato-man; when she's without a lodger, she doesn't buy half-a-pound of meat in the week; and seldom gets a good dinner except when she's invited out; and *then*, they *do* say, she eats voracious! You've paid the first quarter in advance? That, of course; that's her plan; all she cares about is to secure that, and the sooner you go the better she'll like it, for she'll then bait her trap for another 'sympathizing companion.' Lord, ma'am, we know her advertisement by heart, for it's in the *Times* generally six times a year. As for her *extras*—oh!—(And here he turned up his eyes.)—'But you've no redress; I can tell you *that* for your comfort. Then, as to—Beg pardon, ma'am.—Shave you directly, sir. Sorry I happen to be out of those little articles, ma'am. Good morning, ma'am.'

"My eyes were opened. But I'll come at once to the end of the first week, when I received the lady's '*little bill for extras*!' Would you believe it! 10s. 2d.!—in the proportion of about two-thirds in addition to the payment agreed for, to say nothing of my own little stock of wine for which I had already paid the merchant!

The first charge was 'extra tea, first night, 8*d*.' This she explained by saying that as she had taken tea when I arrived, *extra* tea was made for me. Then, everything *she didn't usual'y take herself*, was an extra—there was extra bread for *lunch* and *supper*; butter extra; cheese, *white* sugar, eggs, milk, tea. But what did she mean by a charge for milk and tea? Why, she always put in two additional spoonfuls of tea for me, and took in an additional quantity of milk! I battled the point, but to no purpose: she ended by bursting into tears, and saying,

"Well, sweet friend, if you are dissatisfied, you are perfectly at liberty to go away."

"This I resolved not to do. Thanks to my friend the *perfumer*, I am enlightened as to her practice; so here will I remain till the very last hour of the time I have paid for in advance. That day, at dinner, however (shabby as I felt myself for it), I did not give her her couple of glasses of wine as I had hitherto done; nor have I done so since. Neither have I allowed her to partake of any of the *extras* that have been provided for *Mrs. Slymore*. I have my revenge in another way also; I resolutely refuse to sympathize with her *sorrows*, read her *poetry*, or listen to her *story*.

"Yours sincerely,
"H. St. E."

Extract from the Same to the Same.

"Starveleigh Cottage,
"Wednesday, 24th—

"You are right in what you say in yours of yesterday, which I have just received; and (between ourselves) who should understand the matter better than you?—'That Mrs. Woelfield is too bad, for one ought to be a little reasonable even in cheating one's lodgers.' But, no, Fleecer; all you can say is in vain: here will I stay till the very last day of my term, *to spite her*.

She shall get as little as possible by me—I will not give up one single day to her. Meanwhile, my own situation is not the most comfortable. We scarcely speak to each other, and I am, for the greater part of my time, in my own room. But I am resolved to carry it on to the end I am glad you have let your drawing-rooms, and to a Member of Parliament, too! It was very kind of him to send me down the muslin under a Government frank. How I stared when I received a packet marked *On His Majesty's Service!* I couldn't imagine what it could be. And what a bow the postman made when he delivered it to me! Perhaps your M.P. would oblige me by forwarding the large chest of books (the *black* one) in the same way So, I see by the newspaper, poor Slymore's friend, R——, the distiller, has been fined six thousand pounds for defrauding the revenue. I am not sorry for it: I have no patience with such practices! I send this under cover to your lodger. I have no patience at paying postage, if one can avoid it. . . . Mr. Quidy always talking to you about his *friend* Lord Noodleton—what care I? . . .”

Extract from the Same to the Same.

“Thank Heaven! my wretched three months will expire on Monday. I have booked a place in the coach, so you may expect to see me on the evening of that day. . . . The kindest of letters from Mr. Scott! Sent me my first quarter's interest on the very day it was due, even without my applying for it! What say you now, my dear friend? *He strongly recommends my giving this place a trial for three months longer:* but, no. Accustomed to pleasant society, as I have been, I never knew, till now, how impossible it is for me to live without it. . . . Your eternal Mr. Quidy, gone to Margate for a month, is he? Interesting information for *me* truly!”

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CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Our Hero, encouraged by a Friend at Court, persists in being desperately in Love—A mysterious Announcement—"Though a Lodginghouse-keeper she has a Heart:" *Quotation from a Sentimental Comedy*—A calamitous Event "*honestly and candidly*" recorded.

"COME back?" exclaimed Quiddy, "I'm uncommon happy. And pray, my dear, good lady, when did Miss St. Egremont return?"

"She has been in town nearly a month," replied Mrs. Fleecer. "She returned about a week after you went to Margate."

"I *will not* come down," said Miss St. Egremont to Mrs. Fleecer. "You may entertain your visitor yourself."

"But he is so *very* anxious to see you," said Fleecer, "and he'll think your refusal so *very* odd."

"What care I either for his thoughts or his anxieties?" said Honoria.

"Then what shall I say to him, Norey?"

"You may tell him the truth: I will not see him either now or at any future time."

"That girl is a perfect *non compos*—when he's ready, as he says, to pop the question at once!" muttered Mrs. Fleecer, as she descended the stairs.

"Miss S. sends her very best compliments," said Mrs. Fleecer to Quiddy: "she hopes you'll pardon her for not coming down this evening, as she has a dreadful headach."

"I am uncommon sorry," said Quiddy; and he *was* uncommon sorry—at losing this opportunity of pressing his suit with a lady whose property was "not secured for her in the hands of trustees," but "every shilling of which was entirely at her own disposal."

"I know my sex generally, Q.," continued Mrs. Fleecer; "no woman is in a hurry to give up her independence; and I know *her* as well as I know myself. If ever she should marry she'll marry the man of her heart, though he hadn't enough to buy the wedding-ring with."

This, like the half-hour's conversation that had preceded it, passed in whispers.

"And there's the danger," said Quiddy: "she may be snapped up by some adventurer who thinks of nothing but her fortune, and who might squander it away in a twelvemonth. But *I*, my good lady, with my wealth, and all made by sheer industry—"

"Ah! there!" said Fleecer; "knowing her proud spirit as I do, I fear your wealth is more against you than anything else could be. If, on the contrary, you were not so monstrous rich, and she liked you—But, as I've often told you, all this is idle talk, considering that, *as yet*, she is scarcely acquainted with you."

"Scarcely acquainted with me, ma'am! Lord bless you! P. Q. is easily known. There's no guile, no deceit about *me*. You may see into my 'art at once."

And, leaving the important noun unsupplied with its dropt aspirate, this was particularly true.

"I saw into it from the first," said Mrs. Fleecer.

"Oh! ma'am, you flatter."

"But that's Miss St. Egremont's bell, so I must leave you. However, come again soon—'Faint heart never won fair lady;' and, remember—you have a friend at court. There's the bell again, so good evening, Q., good evening."

"Good evening, my dear good lady," said Quiddy; "*nil desperado*."

* * * * *

"What's the matter with you?" said Honoria to Mrs. Fleecer.

Let our promised seven-league-boots style of narrative still be borne in mind. Between our hero's "*nil desperado*" and the present question intervened nearly two months: these we have passed over at a stride. We *might* have related all that had occurred at the several visits which Quiddy had made in Surrey-street; recorded all his expressions of sorrow and regret at Miss St. Egremont's absence upon every such occasion; and reported Fleecer's various and ingenious excuses and subterfuges to account for it. The young lady had still resolutely refused to see him; the elder one had nearly come to her wit's end for pretexts to keep him on; and this task had been daily increasing in difficulty, inasmuch as Quiddy, wearied by disappointment upon disappointment, had begun to think of treating the pursuit of the great heiress as one would treat an impracticable riddle—that is to say, by "giving it up." We might also have stated at full length all the little schemes and plans imagined by Honoria for living upon her small income like a lady; all her friend's arguments to prove that they were every one unfeasible; and how many times a-day the latter had repeated, that the only mode in the universal world by which her laudable desire of living like a lady could be accomplished, was by her becoming Mrs. Quiddy, which she might be on any day of the week, if (as Mrs. Fleecer eloquently expressed it), "if, Norey, you were not as obstinate as the parish pump in a hard frost." Instead of all that, we, for reasons of our own, jump to the question which was put by Honoria to her friend as they were sitting at breakfast one morning, nearly three months after the return of the former from Starveleigh Cottage.

"There *is* something the matter with you, I'm sure," said Honoria: "you have been crying—why, you are crying now."

"Nothing, dear, indeed it's nothing," replied Fleecer. "I did not sleep very well, that's all."

"Then pray let me have no more of it, Fleecer. I had enough of that at Mrs. Woefield's to last me my life. Consider—such a rainy season as I lived through! a set-in shower of tears for three months! But what *can* be the reason the newspaper is not come this morning?"

"As I told you before, dear, I suppose the boy has forgot to bring it," said Fleecer, pretending to sneeze, as an excuse for putting her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Then send Betty for it," said Honoria; "I can't bear to pass a day without seeing the newspaper."

"Yes—no—by-and-bye," stammered Mrs. Fleecer. "And now, my dear Norey, do come down if Mr. Quiddy should come to tea with me this evening. I've particular reasons for it. You must—you shall—I won't take a denial. You know I'm your friend; and believe me when I say there's no time to be lost. He'll marry you to-morrow if you will but say the word; and then you will be settled, and a lady for life."

This and much more to the same purpose did she say, and with an earnestness that positively astonished the lady to whom it was addressed. At length, recovering herself, Honoria said,

"You have settled the point at last, Mrs. Fleecer. I had almost accustomed myself to your constant worry upon this foolish subject, and, lately, have done no more than laugh at it; but this serious outbreak of yours is really too much. At the end of this week I shall quit your house, and never will I enter it again. Remember—I warned you long ago that it would come to this."

The look, tone, and manner of the speaker as she uttered these words, left no doubt upon the mind of the hearer that she was in earnest. And she was so. Miss St. Egremont quitted the room.

"Poor girl!—poor, unfortunate girl!" said Mrs. Fleecer, the instant she was alone: "I *knew* it would be so—I *told* her so."

And while she spoke, she drew from her pocket the newspaper which, when Honoria joined her at breakfast, she had hastily, and unperceived by her, thrust into it. Again did she read the following *cautious* paragraph which appeared under the head of CITY INTELLIGENCE :—

“Just as business was over yesterday afternoon, it was whispered on 'Change that a certain highly-respectable house in the city had failed for a very large amount. As no names were *distinctly* mentioned, it would be imprudent, if not, indeed, highly improper, to say more *at present* than that the house thus mysteriously alluded to is that of Messrs. Wh-bble and Sc-tt, the eminent b-ll br-k-rs in B-rch-n L-ne. The failure (of which we fear we may confidently state that there is not the slightest doubt) is generally attributed to the losses at play and on the turf, and to the boundless extravagance of the junior partner, Mr. H-rry Sc-tt.”

It is but a just compliment to the penetration of Mrs. Fleecer to say, that, cautiously and mysteriously as the “certain highly-respectable house” was alluded to, she nevertheless, from amongst the numerous highly-respectable houses in the city, singled out the right one. She reflected for a while how it would be best for her to proceed in this unhappy affair, and presently resolved to go instantly to Mr. Scott's office and ascertain the truth or the falsehood of the report. To save poor Honoria, in the meanwhile, from the dreadful shock which the paragraph, whether true or false, would occasion her, she kindly and considerably desired Betty to tell Miss St. Egremont, in reply to any inquiry she might make about the newspaper, that it had not been sent; and, moreover, should she be sent out to procure one, to return and say there was not one to be had.

“And now, Betty,” said she, “I am going out for an

hour or two. Be careful and mind what I've told you, and I'll give you a shilling : if you make the least mistake I'll turn you away at a minute's warning."

The inducement, without the threat, was sufficient for Betty.

"I'll not only say it but *swear* to it, mum," said Betty, determined to earn the shilling honestly. "When I promise to tell a lie, mum, you may believe me." And she thought to herself, "Lor ! if missis did but pay me a shilling apiece for 'em what a rich woman should I be by this time !"

It was but too true ! The offices of Messrs. Whobble and Scott were closed, and on the outer door was pasted a notice that all letters and parcels for them were to be sent to, and all inquiries concerning them made at, Messrs. Docket and Writmore's, solicitors, Threadneedle-street. Thither did Mrs. Fleecer proceed.

And what were the answers to poor Fleecer's anxious inquiries ? The firm would appear as bankrupts in the next gazette : their affairs would be in as bad a state as it was possible to conceive : the creditors would be fortunate should they recover sixpence, or, indeed, anything in the pound : Mr. Whobble, who had latterly left the entire management of the business to his junior partner, had been deceived and was ruined by him ; and Mr. Harry Scott (as they had just discovered) had sailed for America a week ago, having left town on the pretence of going to Brighton for a few days for the benefit of his health. Any further information which the lady might desire, Mr. Docket would be most "happy and delighted" to give her. As, however, the happiness and delight was likely to be all on Mr. Docket's side, the information she had already received she thought quite sufficient.

With the intention of asking the advice of Mr. Quiddy she went to Mark-lane. She had actually reached his house, when she suddenly stopped.

"What a fool I am!" thought she. "This dreadful business has quite bewildered me. What was I going to do? No—I must keep *him* in the dark about it, at all events. *He* must not know she is penniless."

With a heavy heart and streaming eyes she proceeded homewards.

"Well," thought she, "let it come to the worst she shall never want a home whilst I have one. But how shall I break this matter to her? Ah! if she had but taken my advice! But I told her how it would be—I told her so."

"THEN I AM LEFT DESTITUTE IN THE WORLD!" said Honoria.

And so she was; "honestly and candidly" she was so.

Though with the utmost caution and tenderness Fleecer divulged to poor Honoria the heavy calamity which had befallen her, the blow was astounding. "Master Barnardine, you must rise and be hanged," was an intimation unwelcomely received by the gentleman to whom it was addressed; nor did he display any greater satisfaction at the summons when it was delivered in the more insinuating form of "You must *be so good, sir*, to rise and be put to death." The truth is, that "Master Barnardine, you must rise and be hanged" is an invitation which the most captivating coaxing, or the blindest persuasion, must fail to render agreeable; and though Persiani herself should warble it to the party invited, embellishing it even with her sweetest and most artistical variations, still would the burden of the song be, "you must rise and be hang'd." *That* is not to be surmounted. And so is it usually with the very best attempts to render any great calamity palatable.

But to each and all of those topics of comfort and

consolation Honoria's only reply was, "But I am destitute ! I am destitute !"

It may be thought that, as an obvious remedy for this cruel misfortune, Mrs. Fleecer suggested her sublime panacea, Mr. Phineas Quidy. But no : whatever may have been passing in her mind, she had too much tact to name him at such a moment. It may be thought also that she would vindicate her own sagacity by an occasional "Ah ! if you had but followed my advice !" or, "I knew how it would end," or "I told you how it would be." But, strange as it may appear, she did not mingle with her words of consolation one syllable of reproach. We do not attribute this forbearance on her part to exquisite delicacy of feeling or refinement of mind. Had her friend lost but *half* her fortune Mrs. Fleecer probably would not have relinquished the opportunity of enjoying her small triumph ; but Honoria, whom she really loved, was utterly ruined ; and all considerations of self-gratification were merged in sorrow for her misfortune.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Kind Inquiries—The Effects produced on a Lady's firmest Resolutions by the Discovery that she has nothing *per annum* to live upon—Quiddy, with his usual Instinct of Self-protection takes Lawyers' Opinions, and, satisfied with *them*——!

DURING the six weeks that poor Honoria had been confined to her bed by the severe illness occasioned by the shock she had received, Quidy called almost daily to inquire concerning the state of the fair sufferer.

"—— and six weeks' illness would change anybody," said Quidy.

"You would hardly know her again, Q.," continued Mrs. Fleecer. "Poor thing ! so altered as she is she wouldn't like *you* to see her just now. But, thank

Heaven, Doctor Twicknam—and as clever a man he is as any in the profession—not one of the physicking sort, but a doctor after my own heart, for he prescribes port-wine in preference to pills and powders—Doctor Twicknam says that a couple of glasses of port a-day, and a month at Brighton, will make her as well, ay, and as *handsome* again as ever, Q.”

“Handsome, Mrs. F.!” exclaimed he: “that’s all one to me: handsome or ugly, my love for *her* won’t be less one way or the other.”

“That I *do* believe,” said Mrs. Fleecer.

“Ah! she has had a narrow escape,” said Quiddy. “And no accounting for her illness, as you’ve often told me, eh, ma’am?”

“Not in the least,” replied she. “In the morning she was as well as we are; and, at night, I wouldn’t have insured her life for the value of a China orange.”

“And if anything *had* happened to her! Without a relation in the world, as you’ve said, what *would* have become of her fortune! Well, I suppose it would have been better for *somebody*, eh, my dear, good lady?”

To this supposition, which was accompanied with a knowing look, the other evasively replied,

“She has a great regard for me, certainly.”

* * * *

Whobble and Scott—a first and final dividend of fourpence in the pound!

“Well,” said Honoria, throwing down a letter, “this completes it! In my present condition twelve hundred fourpences would have been something to me; but Docket and Writmore say that Mr. Whobble not having signed the bond, I have no claim upon the estate; it is a private debt of Scott’s. Honestly and candidly,” added she, with a bitter laugh, “honestly and candidly, he has left me in a pleasing condition!”

“The villain!” exclaimed Mrs. Fleecer. “But never mind, my dear,” continued she; “as I have told you from the first, here is a home for you as long as I live.”

"You are a kind-hearted creature," replied Honoria, "but (I must repeat it) a life of dependance I will not lead."

"Then what *will* you do?" said Mrs. Fleecer; "for you have not a shilling to live upon."

Miss St. Egremont made no reply; for, much as she had thought upon the subject, she had not succeeded in devising an expedient for her self-support.

"A life of dependance is wretched enough, and that's the truth of it," said Mrs. Fleecer; who, with the hope of working out her favourite project, artfully resolved to make Honoria thoroughly miserable by suggesting to her the worst and most repelling of the probable consequences of her destitute condition. So she continued:—

"But you needn't be *dependant* upon me, Norey, dear. To make it agreeable to your feelings, you shall do a little work for me. I don't mean as a common servant: no; you shall just wait upon the *better* sort of lodgers, and take care of the house-linen and keep it in order for me. That will be like *earning* your living; so you will be under no obligation to me. I'll not *pay* you anything; for the vales, the half-crowns and shillings you'll get from the lodgers, will keep you in pocket-money—so for *that* you'll be under no obligation to me."

Miss St. Egremont felt as if pricked with red-hot needles; but she replied not. Mrs. Fleecer proceeded:—

"Or, if you were to take in needlework? To be sure, by working your fingers to the bone you couldn't earn more than eighteenpence a-day—but that would be better than nothing, and something you *must* do to *earn your living*."

And to this Miss St. Egremont replied not.

"As to opening a school for little children (as you have talked of doing) that would be a *very* bad speculation; and what else to think of I'm sure I don't know.

—Dear me ! a thought strikes me : lady's-maid to a lady of quality—or upper nursery-maid in a *respectable* family. It wouldn't be pleasant to you, after living like a lady yourself for so many years, that I admit ; but there would be no disgrace in it, my dear Norey ; and in your forlorn condition you must do *something to earn your living.*"

And to *this* Miss St. Egremont, though she sighed deeply, replied not.

"As to marrying Mr. Quiddy," said Mrs. Fleecer, "(which you might do this very hour if you would,) that's a subject I'm resolved I'll never mention again ; for, whenever I do, you fly out so ! No—since you are so blind to your own interest—But I'll never name him again."

And to **THIS** Miss St. Egremont made no reply !

"*I've done it !*" thought Mrs. Fleecer.

This conversation occurred at noon. In the course of the evening of that same day—

"That's Quiddy's knock, dear," said Mrs. Fleecer. "Go up to your own room, as you don't like to see him. I'll get rid of him as soon as I can, and will let you know when he's gone."

"Why," said Honoria, "I don't know, but, really—upon my word, I—as you say he has made so many inquiries about me, why, to thank him will be but an act of common civility."

"Yes, *I have done it,*" thought Mrs. Fleecer.

Our hero was, as usual, received in Mrs. Fleecer's room. He took dummy—the ladies played against him. Miss St. Egremont was not uncivil to him, although he occasionally delivered himself of an expression which was too pointed to be misunderstood ; Mrs. Fleecer was more than once at the point of joyfully uttering, "*I've done it !*" and Quiddy, happy Quiddy, was happy Quiddy to the last, notwithstanding his loss of ninepence at cards. An invitation to take his revenge on the following evening was proposed by

Mrs. Fleecer, seconded by Miss St. Egremont, and rapturously accepted by him.

* * * * *

—— ——— “I admit what you say upon that point to be true, Fleecer,” said Miss St. Egremont, in conclusion : “his ugliness is *not* a very important point for consideration ; but then, he is so *very* disagreeable. Good night.”

* * * * *

On the following evening Mr. Quiddy was, for the first time, received in Miss St. Egremont’s apartment—the drawing-room !

He again departed a loser—singular coincidence !—of ninepence ; yet so delighted was he by the amiable behaviour of the heiress, that he exhibited not, either by word or look, the slightest symptom of ill-humour.

—— ——— “I admit what you say upon that point to be true, Fleecer,” said Miss St. Egremont, in conclusion : “though he is not the most agreeable person in the world, he may, nevertheless, possess many good qualities. Good night.”

Next morning ——— ——— ———

“From all these inquiries,” said the worthy Iscariot Hitchflat to our hero, “I presume you are about to marry.”

“Oh, no—not I,” replied Quiddy, with his characteristic ingenuousness ; “no thoughts of such a thing.”

“Then why are you so anxious for the information ?” inquired Hitchflat.

“Why—because—in short, one likes to know such things, that’s all,” said Quiddy. “Ahem !—But you are *certain* that that is the law : if no settlements are made *before* marriage, the woman’s property becomes the husband’s ?”

“Clearly,” replied the worthy Hitchflat.

“And the woman has no control whatever over it afterwards ?” said Quiddy.

"None in the world," said the respectable limb of the law. "But I thought every child knew that."

This information corroborated that which he had just previously received from his legal adviser in the city. Joyfully rubbing his hands as he departed, he exclaimed,

"All's right and safe then !"

On that very evening (taking advantage of Mrs. Fleecer's prolonged absence—an absence, by her, premeditated) the agreeable Quidy made a proposal of marriage to Miss Honoria St. Egremont !

And what were the chief points preceding this important step ?

He talked over-much of his "*disinterested* affection ;" still more of his "many thousands ;" but he delicately abstained from even the slightest allusion to the lady's "*fortune*."

And how was the proposal received ?

Miss St. Egremont was "surprised"—"astonished"—"utterly confounded"—"she could say nothing to it"—"she knew not what to say"—"he must leave her"—"she was in such a state of mind !"—"*indeed* he *must* leave her *for the present*."

"Nonsense, Q.," said Mrs. Fleecer, who had been waiting for him in the 'hall'—"a refusal, indeed ! I listened at the keyhole, and heard all that passed ; it's as good as if she had said 'Yes' a thousand times over. Come again to-morrow."

Delighted and happy, away he went.

"Ecod I *am* a 'cute fellow !" thought he ; "I'll marry her out of hand, or some one or other may put it into her head to think of settlements."

CHAPTER XL.

An important Chapter, though not equal in Importance to the next.

"I TELL you again you are *not* practising a deception upon him, Norey," said Mrs. Fleecer; "no more am I: he is deceiving himself. Out of a few words which I dropped promiscuous the first time we met him at the play, he got a notion into his head that you are intolerable rich, and that notion he has never got out of it. Why should *you* be over-nice in the matter? He cares little more for you than for me; and if he knew your real situation, we should see no more of him in Surrey-street, take my word for that."

"To marry a man who has no affection for one!" said Honoria; "horrid!—Some admiration of my person, perhaps." [The looking-glass was opposite to where she was standing.] "But where there is nothing beyond that, the chances of happiness are slight indeed!"

"Psha! you'll get on very well together after a little time," said the other. "I don't mean to say he's exactly the person to choose for a lover, but you'll soon learn to put up with him for a husband."

"And when he discovers the deception—or, no; I won't call it a deception," continued Honoria (who was beginning to look at the matter in a different light)—"but when he discovers the mistake into which he has been betrayed by his own self-interested and sordid motives, what is likely to be his behaviour to me?"

"He can't discover that until you are married," said Mrs. Fleecer.

"And why not?" inquired Honoria.

"Did he say a word to you last night about your *fortune*?" inquired Fleecer.

"Not a syllable," replied Honoria.

"And why didn't he, my dear? Because he fancied that, should he touch upon that subject, it might lead to some talk about settlements and all that sort of thing; as it is—and recollect what I wrote to you when you were at Pesterton, about his anxiety to know whether you were in the hands of trustees—as it is, he thinks that the moment the ring is on your finger, your fortune will, of its own accord, tumble into *his* pocket—and then my gentleman has it! Ah! Norey, my dear; believe me those very cunning people are sometimes too cunning for themselves."

"But I dread to think of what may be his usage of me in consequence of his disappointment," said Honoria.

"As to that," said Fleecer, "there is such a thing as a separate maintenance; and to be Mrs. Quiddy with a separate maintenance (little as it may be) will be a better thing than to remain Miss St. Egremont with no maintenance at all. But I'm not afraid of its coming to that: with your sense, and spirit, and temper, and education, and so forth, it will be a strange thing indeed if you don't keep him in order."

"Ah! Mr. Honestly-and-Candidly," said Honoria (and a bitter sigh was wrung from her bosom by the thought), "you have I to thank for the pleasant prospect before me also."

That evening Miss St. Egremont, accompanied by Mrs. Fleecer, accepted Mr. Quiddy's invitation to the Play. On their return home, Mr. Quiddy accepted Mrs. Fleecer's invitation to partake of a little supper which had been prepared in Miss St. Egremont's apartment!

On the following evening Miss St. Egremont accompanied Mr. Quiddy to the Opera. Mrs. Fleecer, *unfortunately*, was too unwell to be of the party!!

On the morning succeeding that, Mr. Quiddy had the honour and happiness of exhibiting to Miss St.

Egremont the giants in Guildhall, together with some others of the wonders of the City !!!

There is an old proverb to the effect that "Needs must, when a certain gentleman (who shall be nameless) mounts the coachbox." Time was when this theme might peradventure have tempted us to the commission of a digression, a short essay, or a dissertation ; but, hastening to a conclusion, we shall say no more than—Poor Honoria !

* * * *

"I ought to be very angry with you," said Honoria, when Mrs. Fleecer showed her the parcel and the note, both of which remained in the state in which she had received them from the former—that is to say, unopened.

"Why, my dear," said Mrs. Fleecer, "if I had allowed this bombasin to be returned to him, and with such a note as this of yours, we never should have seen him again. But, as you are now out of mourning, what had we better do with it?"

"I think you may as well keep it for yourself," said Honoria, laughing.

A week passed away and Miss St. Egremont had not yet given her positive consent to the suit of her adorer. Hour by hour did the impatience of the latter increase ; for who could tell (he could not) what might occur to baffle his hopes, well-grounded though they were ? Fleecer, the adroit, had provoked this misgiving by *unguardedly* letting drop a word about an imaginary Major O'Mahony and a visionary Captain O'Callaghan (gallant officers, both of whom were indebted to her for their commissions), who sometimes "looked in." One or other of these "rascally fortune-hunters," as Quiddy justly and indignantly considered them, might run off with the prize ; or some busy meddler might wickedly suggest to the young lady the expediency of securing to herself her own property before (what he called) the *guardian-knot* was tied—a proceeding which would

leave him little more than the possession of the young lady herself.

"I don't see the need of her going to Brighton," said Quiddy to Mrs. Fleecer, "for she appears to be perfectly well again. I'm sorry, very sorry for it, for I can't bear to pass a day without seeing her. If, indeed, business would allow me to leave town for a few days, the case would be different; but, unfortunately, you see——And when will she go?"

"Not till the end of the week," replied Mrs. Fleecer; and with a studied air of indifference she added, "Indeed I don't see how she can well go earlier, for she is expecting the arrival of a gentleman from the country—an old and very confidential friend of her late uncle's—who is coming to advise her as to the safest and prudentest mode of arranging her affairs."

This "gentleman," we scarcely need say, was very closely related to the "captain" and the "major."

Quiddy was dumbfounded. But quickly recovering himself, he exclaimed—

"Brighton—well—after all, since Dr. Twicknam recommends it, I think she ought to go; and, in my opinion, she ought to go immediately. And as *you* say, my dear good lady, she knows nobody there, and you can't go with her, *I'll* go. Now can't you persuade her to go at once—to-morrow, or the next day at the latest—eh, Mrs. F.?"

"I'll try what I can do, Q.—And, mind—do you follow her; there you'll have her all to yourself. Play the agreeable; take her to the libraries, and to walk on the cliffs, and the parade, and the *Steam*; and if you are the man I take you for, you insinuating creature.—But hush! here she comes."

CHAPTER XLI.

For the astonishing Reason that the previous Chapter is less important than the Present, this is the more important of the Two.

A SERMON in little, a brief and touching History of Human Life, is that small corner of the newspapers which is devoted to the announcement of Births, Marriages, and Deaths!

Scarcely had a fortnight elapsed, when in the second compartment of that register in the *Morning Post* there appeared—

“LATELY, AT BRIGHTON, PHINEAS QUIDDY, ESQ., OF MARK-LANE, LONDON, TO MISS HONORIA ST. EGREMONT.”

CHAPTER XLII.

Our Hero a married Man—A strong Case of “*Gray Mare*” is established—He is under the disagreeable necessity of living like a Gentleman—Pleasant Parties *versus* Prudery: Verdict for the Plaintiff—The Way of the World.

THE first few weeks succeeding their marriage, whilst the sting of disappointed avarice and (which was, if possible, still more galling) of baffled “cuteness” was rankling in Quiddy’s heart, were passed in mutual reproach and recrimination. Such honey-(?)moon was, however, productive of this advantage to them: it assured them that their affection for each other could never, under any circumstances, suffer decrease—a prospect which is not always realized after honeymoons of a more agreeable character. Quiddy sometimes, indeed, thought of a separation; but, in that case, exposures unfavourable to him might be made: the matter would become the town-talk, and he would be

laughed at for having outwitted and overreached his own very dear and clever self.

That "When things come to the worst they must mend," is an adage which is not in all cases true; for, occasionally, when they have arrived at that pleasant point, there will they obstinately remain. It was true, however, in the instance before us. To quarrel and turmoil at length succeeded a state of quiet passably decent. Affection there was none, nor happiness in its pure and exquisite sense; but habit reconciled them at last to each other's society; and if it did no more, it did at least as much as could reasonably have been expected. They were indissolubly bound together: it was necessary to their comfort, their mere comfort, that they should make the best of their hymeneal bondage, and this for their own separate and individual sakes, they endeavoured to do.

* * * * *

They had been married three years.

"I think Bloomsbury-square is quite good enough for us," said Mr. Quiddy, ill-humouredly.

"Quite," said Mrs. Quiddy, coolly; "but I am tired of it, and Russell-square will be better."

"I wonder, madam, you don't at once talk of Portman-square or Grosvenor-square," said he.

"I may, perhaps, one of these days," replied she; "but the other will do for the present. This house is not large enough for my parties, and that will be just the thing. I have been over it from the top to the bottom; it is in tolerable repair; and, except for papering, and painting, and gilding, and a few such trifles, it will not cost us more than a few hundreds to get into it. It will require new furniture, certainly; but that, you know, is mere matter of course."

"And pray, madam, where is the money to come from?"

"From your sheer industry, which you are so fond of talking about," replied Honoria, with a laugh.

"You have now upwards of eighty thousand pounds; we neither of us have a relative in the world; we have no children to provide for; and as circumstances are likely so to remain to the end of the chapter, why cannot you be content to spend your money like a gentleman?"

"But you are not satisfied, Mrs. Q., with my spending my money like *a* gentleman; you expect me to spend as much as if I was twenty gentlemen."

"No, no, Mr. Quidy," said Honoria, laughing. "I am not so exorbitant in my expectations: conduct yourself in *any* matter like one gentleman, and I shall be satisfied."

"Very well, ma'am, very well indeed," said Quidy, piqued by the retort; "quite as it ought to be: a lady who brings her husband ten thousand pounds on the wedding-day, has a right to give herself airs."

"Still the old subject!" exclaimed Mrs. Quidy. "Now do you suppose that had I possessed such a fortune—had not, indeed, my friend Mr. Honestly-and-candidly left me destitute, utterly destitute—do you suppose I would have married Mr. Phineas Quidy?"

"Well, ma'am, that's candid, at any rate," cried Quidy.

"'Tis of your own seeking," laughingly replied she; "you know that whenever you allude to that subject, so surely do you provoke that avowal. But why reproach *me*? I didn't deceive you; blinded by avarice, you deceived yourself. Had you had the manliness, the candour, to question me concerning the state of my affairs, I would have told you the truth."

"Candour, indeed!" exclaimed he; "if you had had the candour to tell me you hadn't a shilling in the world—"

"I should no longer have been tormented by Mr. Quidy's protestations of disinterested affection. But, no:—you eagerly followed me to Brighton; you left me not a moment to myself; by all the means that

could be used you hurried me into marriage ; nor was it till the morning after the wedding, when you thought my "fortune" secure within your grasp, that you questioned me concerning it—in what it consisted—in what stock it was invested ; and when you were informed of the real state of the case—ha ! ha ! ha !—I wish Gilray or Rowlandson could have seen you !"

"I see nothing to laugh at, at all events, ma'am ; and—and—if *you* didn't deceive me, Mrs. Fleecer did."

"No, not even exactly that," said Mrs. Quiddy : "the most that I will admit against her is, that she furnished you with the threads with which you yourself constructed a net—to catch yourself in."

"And in gratitude for that little service," said Quiddy, "you insisted on my settling upon her sixty pounds a-year for her life."

"No," said Mrs. Quiddy, "you know very well it was not for that. In the first place, what would have become of the poor old soul, when, very soon after our marriage, her house in Surrey-street was burned to the ground, together with everything in it, and she was uninsured ? As it is, there is she comfortably settled for the rest of her life with her sister in Cornwall." She paused ere she continued. "Then—although she is not malicious, yet, when once her tongue is set moving, her discretion is not to be depended on. We *now* are not likely ever to see her again ;—and—and—for certain reasons it is better that it should be so."

Whatever may have been the "certain reasons" so tenderly alluded to, Quiddy made no reply to the remark.

And here we will mention a circumstance which is not altogether unworthy of notice.

Whenever Mr. Quiddy spoke to his lady of the late Mr. Slymore (which was seldom), whatever he may have known, or thought, or suspected, he invariably called him her "uncle." Now, well acquainted as we

are with the constitution of his mind, we cannot attribute the circumstance in question to an overstrained, a morbid delicacy of feeling : we must allow it, therefore, to be assigned to some motive of which *self* was the object.—Could he have thought that his own position in society might have been affected by his recognition, or otherwise, of the relationship ?”

“ I *will*,” continued Mrs. Quiddy, “ so say no more about it. Besides, the house is your own property ; and (as you have said) you got it at a third of its value by the failure of its late owner to redeem it on a certain day.”

“ True,” said Quiddy ; “ but if you go on throwing away with two hands what I am scraping together with one——”

“ Pray, Mr. Quiddy, don’t talk to me in that vulgar sordid style. I am resolved to remove to it, so be quiet.”

“ Well, Mrs. Q., if you will, you will ; that I know to my cost. But this I have to say ; once there, I hope I shall hear no more about moving again.”

“ I *hope* so, too,” replied the lady ; “ but we are living in a world of uncertainties, and cannot answer positively for anything.” And she rang for the carriage.

“ May I ask where you are going ?” inquired Quiddy.

“ It doesn’t exactly concern you to know. However, I am going to Veneer’s, the upholsterer’s, in Bond-street, to consult about the furniture, and carpets, and glasses,” replied Mrs. Quiddy.

“ Veneer’s !” exclaimed Quiddy ; “ why, ma’am, they are the dearest people in all London !”

“ So it is said,” said Mrs. Quiddy, in a tone of indifference ; “ but they are the best ; and, then, for taste there is nothing like them.”

“ Ah ! taste,” muttered Quiddy ; “ I hear about nothing but taste ; and a pretty expensive article I find it !”

We cannot state precisely the period at which the discovery was made (though probably it was not long

subsequent to the ingenious invention of horses) that when two persons ride on horseback one must mount behind. Now applying the expression figuratively to Mr. and Mrs. Q., we think the preceding scene will have rendered it clear that our hero was not the one who usually occupied the seat nearest the animal's head.

By this time the pair had become acquainted with each other's ways. And what were those? Mrs. Quiddy's way—(and wisely, considering that there is nothing like having the start, she very soon after her marriage manifested, beyond the possibility of a doubt, what her way was)—Mrs. Quiddy's way was to have her own way: Mr. Quiddy's was—to submit to it. This he never did with a good grace, unless (which was seldom) their ways happened to tend to the same point. He would attempt, or rather, pretend resistance (as we have seen) just for form's sake; as a gun-boat might fire a single shot on surrendering to an enemy's seventy-four: but—submit he did. And why? Because he very well knew there was no help for it.

Is it possible! And was Phineas Quiddy, the arrogant, the overbearing, the tyrannical, subdued into the most submissive of men? Yes; *at home*. But in the City, on 'Change, and in his money-manufactory in Mark-lane——! Woe to his "people," from the head clerk in his counting-house down to the underling; from the superintendent of his warehouse down to the scrubby errand-boy such as himself had been; double woe to the poor, the needy, who applied to him for his help—the *usurer's* HELP!—to the humble and trembling suppliant who applied to him for forbearance, for delay, for a merciful relaxation of his rapacious grasp—woe, double and treble woe to him, for (escaped from such scenes as the foregoing), on each and all of their unhappy heads did Quiddy magnanimously avenge his home-subjection! There found he solace meet and sweet for his domestic slavery—there, safely, might he play the tyrant still!

* * * * *

How rapidly time passes ! Another year has gone by.

" I find we have no engagement for the sixteenth, Mr. Quiddy," said his lady.

" None, ma'am," replied he.

" Then I shall issue cards for a small dinner-party—twelve—and thirty, or, perhaps, forty for the evening," said Mrs. Quiddy.

" Why, ma'am, we had the same sort of thing only two days ago !" exclaimed he. " Is there to be no end to this ?"

" Oh, yes," coolly replied she, " at the end of the season."

" Just such a party two days ago, and ——"

" Why, surely, Mr. Quiddy, you wouldn't have me invite all our acquaintance at the same time ! I *must divide* my parties. I haven't a room as large as the Crown and Anchor, and pretty dull work it would be if I had. Now—which of *your* set would you wish me to ask to dinner ! I can spare you three places."

" Three !" said he ; " and the rest will be filled with your *choice* friends—your authors, and painters, and sculptures, and all that sort of thing."

" Exactly so, sir ; one must have a preponderance of talent to overcome the dulness of your——Well ?"

" Why, then," said Quiddy, who knew that resistance would be in vain, " I should like to ask the Cheshires."

" Very well," said she, " that will exactly do it : Sir Gog, her ladyship, and the unmarried daughter Jane. I rather like Jane : she's a sensible, unassuming woman. Jane, be it remembered, being *now*, as a watchman would cry it, "*Pa-ast thirty-two*."

" And I wish, Mrs. Q., you would contrive to ask Alderman Brislethwaite and his wife," said Quiddy.

" Not this time," replied Mrs. Q. " Besides, I don't like the lady ; I haven't even returned her call."

However, should I have any refusals, I'll send them a card, since it will oblige you."

"Well—thank'e—I *shall* be obliged," meekly replied Quiddy.

"In the evening a little music and dancing, and—"

"Ah!" said Quiddy, interrupting her, "that's the most disagreeable part of the affair to me. I don't dance, I don't care about music, and—"

"Dear me!" said the lady, somewhat pettishly, "what *would* you have? Haven't you your quiet rubber at whist in a corner of the back drawing-room, where nobody is in your way," (and she muttered inaudibly) "and where you are in nobody's."

"But all this costs a lot of money, ma'am. And then, as usual, I suppose, there will be supper after all?"

"Supper, Mr. Quiddy! to be sure there will. I have no notion of sending one's friends away with a raspberry-tartlet and a glass of weak wine-and-water.

"Have you a card from the Quiddys for the sixteenth?" inquired Lady Cheshire of Mrs. Alderman Bristlethwaite, who was paying a morning visit to her ladyship.

"What, I!" exclaimed Mrs. Bristlethwaite; "oh, dear, no!"

"Don't you visit?" continued her ladyship.

We know that the alderman's lady had *twice* left her card at Mrs. Quiddy's, and that the latter had not returned the call.

"Visit, indeed! not I," said the alderman's lady, with a contemptuous toss of the head; "and I *must* say, I wonder your ladyship does, *considering*."

"Oh, there was no truth whatever in that report," said Lady Cheshire; "and, for my part I never believed it—*besides*, her parties are among the pleasantest in town."

"Nevertheless, Lady Cheshire, I have it from the alderman, who *must* know—"

"It was a piece of malicious slander, I assure you, my dear Mrs. Bristlethwaite. The late Mr. Slymore *was* her uncle, and she was the orphan daughter of his sister, whose husband, Captain—Captain—dear me, I forget his name—who was killed at—bless me, I forget where he was killed—But no matter ; Sir Gog knows all that to be true, don't you, Sir Gog ?"

"To be sure I know it, my lady—in short, d—d know it—*besides*, they give capital dinners."

"Notwithstanding," said Mrs. Bristlethwaite, "the alderman says—"

"I am telling you the fact—*besides*, their house in Russell-square is furnished with the utmost taste and elegance," said her ladyship.

"Nevertheless," said Mrs. Bristlethwaite—

"Nonsense," said her ladyship : "she is a very charming woman—*besides*, she frequently gives me a seat in her box at the Opera."

"Independently of that, I don't like *him*," said the alderman's lady.

"Vastly improved since his marriage," said Sir Gog ; "in short, d—d vastly ; *besides*, he's worth nearly a hundred thousand pounds."

"I'm told she completely governs him," said Mrs. Bristlethwaite, "and spends his money for him much faster than he likes."

"Why," said Lady Cheshire, laughing, "certainly it is a confirmed case of 'gray mare' (you understand) ; but then she is so superior to him in all respects, that her control over him is not to be wondered at."

"Now, answer me candidly," said Mrs. Bristlethwaite ; "what *sort* of people *do* go there ?"

"*Sort* of people, indeed !" exclaimed Lady Cheshire ; "why, some of the best people in town, including many of the most distinguished literary men and artists—a *sort* of people in whose society she takes great pleasure."

"And how does *he* get on upon such occasions ?" continued the inquirer.

"Oh, he is little better than a cipher amongst them," replied her ladyship.

"But, my dear Lady Cheshire, doesn't he talk?"

"Oh, yes, he *talks* and laughs too. If the subject of conversation be grave and above his comprehension, he listens with a look as wise as an owl's—gives an approving nod, and every now and then exclaims, '*In course—perfectly true—quite agree with you—exactly my opinion.*' If anything pleasant or witty be said, he honours it with a loud '*Ho ! ho ! ho !—uncommon good—capital !*'"

"Does *Miss Cheshire* go with you?" inquired Mrs. Bristlethwaite, in a tone that implied her expectation of an "Oh, dear no," for answer.

"Certainly," replied her ladyship.

"Oh—to be sure—silly question of mine : I have *heard* that a great many *marrying* men visit there," said the good-natured aldermaness.

Lady Cheshire bit her nether lip, and after a moment's silence replied—

"We have no daughters to marry. They are all now, except Jane, settled—admirably ; and she (from the advantageous, *highly* advantageous offers she is constantly refusing) seems to have made up her mind to remain single. Doesn't she, Cheshire?"

"Remain single, my lady?—In short, d—d remain single," responded the knight.

"But, dearest Mrs. Bristlethwaite"—[The tone in which she uttered the "*dearest*" foretold mischief]—"for the reason that marrying men *do* go there, I should think it an excellent visiting-house for people whose daughters *hang on hand.*"

Mrs. Bristlethwaite in her turn bit her lip, was silent, and rose to depart.

"Well, my lady," at length said she, "every lady has a right to choose her own acquaintance ; but considering the report about her—"

"I—I disbelieve it," said Lady Cheshire. "However, it was not till shortly after her marriage that I

had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with her ; and, since then, I would stake *my* character upon the purity of hers."

And, in justice to Mrs. Quiddy, we may say that this her ladyship might safely have done.

Mrs. Bristlethwaite took her leave and departed.

"Mighty nice of that Mrs. Bristlethwaite, upon my word !" exclaimed Lady Cheshire. "Whatever people's memories may be about others, they are conveniently short concerning themselves. What *were* the rights of that Salt Hill affair some years ago, Gog ?—you know what I mean—Major Mopus, of the Cheapside Volunteers—and the alderman stopping to lunch at Salt Hill on his way back from Bristol a week earlier than he was expected—and a postchaise—and Mrs. Bristlethwaite—and the alderman threatening to have a good mind to call the major out. Dear me ! how stupid of me to forget it !"

"Come, come, my lady, that's not fair of your ladyship—in short, d—d not fair. As the matter was hushed up, why—"

"Why, I think it does not exactly become Mrs. Bristlethwaite to be over-severe upon others," said her ladyship. "But that is ever the way with the Mrs. Bristlethwaites of the world !"

On her return home the lady found upon her table a card :—

"Mr. and Mrs. Quiddy request the honour of Mr. Alderman and Mrs. Bristlethwaite's company to dinner on Tuesday, the sixteenth instant, at six o'clock precisely.

"The favour of an answer will oblige."

"How perplexing ! What answer *can* we send ?" exclaimed she.

"What do *you* think, Polly ?" said the alderman.

"I have no doubt she returned *one* of my cards, at least, and so I thought from the first. But those servants are so careless about cards !" said she.

"They give famous dinners, that's certain," said the alderman.

"The *Cheshires* are going," said the lady.

"There will be venison, rely on it," said the alderman.

"And Lady Cheshire, who *must* know, assures me that Slymore *was* her uncle. Moreover, her ladyship says she is a most exemplary, a most excellent, a most delightful, a most charming person: indeed, all the world allows that. And, *then*, she is so *very* accommodating with her box at the Opera."

"And I should not wonder in the least," said the alderman, musingly: "'tis the very best month in the year for it; yes, I'd bet a wager there'll be turtle too."

"And it may pave the way for getting our girls in—and so many *nice* young men go there," said she.

"And *such* Madeira as he has got!" said the alderman.

The *pros* and *cons* (?) touching the propriety of the step having been thus cautiously considered, the invitation was instantly and joyfully accepted.

"Well, Sir Gog," said Lady Cheshire, as they were driving home from Mrs. Quiddy's party on the sixteenth; "well, who would have thought of seeing the Bristlethwaites there, after all! But 'tis the way of the world; and, for my part, I'm not astonished at anything."

"Astonished at anything, my lady," replied the knight; "nor I, my lady—in short, d—d not astonished at anything."

CHAPTER XLIII.

A Remonstrance well intended, but ineffectual—Our Hero all *but* ——An unexpected and alarming Sight, and its fatal Consequences—Conclusion.

MRS. QUIDDY, who had become cognizant of the means whereby our hero had acquired, and continued to

increase, his wealth, frequently remonstrated with him upon what she unhesitatingly stigmatized as the "enormous wickedness" of his proceedings.

"Wickedness, Mrs. Q. ! Why, where's the harm of it ?"

"Where's the harm of it, sir ! Has practice rendered you so callous as to—Heavens ! Is there, then, no harm in oppressing the necessitous—the distressed ? Why, almost every guinea you possess has been wrung out of the needy hand of the unfortunate."

"Pooh ! nonsense, ma'am ; people come to me for help—and I help them. Nobody can expect I should be such a fool as to do so unless I got something by it."

"Help !" exclaimed Mrs. Quiddy. "By *such* help——But as one instance amongst many—the Fairfields—the father died in a gaol, the mother in a madhouse, whilst the eldest daughter, poor girl ! is——Better she were in her grave !"

At this allusion to the Fairfields, Quiddy turned away. For a moment he was silent, whilst a nervous twitching of the mouth might have been observed. At length, with affected indifference, he said—

"Oh, my dear Mrs. Q., you talk womanlike: women understand nothing of business ; business never could be carried on if one were to give way to such fine feelings."

"*Fine* feelings, indeed !" exclaimed she : "I don't understand what you mean by *fine* feelings in these cases ; but this I know, that the exercise of feelings of common honesty, of mere humanity, is imperative, and that little more would be required of you."

"As to humanity," said he, "I have as much as most people ; for I can say, with a safe conscience, that I would not hurt a fly." [Grinding the very hearts out of men went for nothing in his estimation.] "And as to honesty, I always take up my bills when they are due ; and never did a single thing that I should be ashamed for all the world to—"

He paused ; for a vision that sometimes troubled him—the only one that ever seriously did so—rose before him. There was Lickpenny dead in his chair ; and himself violently wrenching the bank-notes from out his clenched hand—that cold and rigid hand. And the same awful shudder that convulsed his frame while the scene was really acting, came over it even now.

This was not observed by his wife, who availed herself of the pause to say—

“Don’t mistake me ; I don’t mean to accuse you of being ashamed of any one action of your life ; but—”

“Well—well,” said our obtuse friend, “that’s all I desire : I only wish to be done justice to.”

“But,” continued Mrs. Quiddy, “do, pray do, relinquish business ; give over your nefa—I mean your not over-creditable pursuits. You are rich enough, more than rich enough, for all desirable purposes ; and—”

“Give up business !” exclaimed he. “Oh ! no ; at least not yet—not till I have rounded a hundred thousand pounds, and got myself knighted, like Sir Gog. Besides, what should I be if I were out of business ? A nobody : little better than a mere nobody. As it is, P. Q. is *somebody*—at least in the *city*, ma’am”—(and he mentally added)—“however contemptibly I may be looked upon in my own house in Russell-square by your choice set.”

“At least, then,” continued the lady, “since you can now afford to do it, pursue your occupation upon equitable principles—like a gentleman. You may thereby do much good, real good, to others, without injury to yourself. You know that when I talk to you upon this subject it is not from any propensity to preaching ; but, seriously, I am so shocked and disgusted at—”

“Ho ! ho ! ho ! my dear good Mrs. Q.,” said Quiddy, with one of his loud, vulgar laughs, “pretty work I should make of it if I followed your advice ! You remember a couple of years ago—eh ? Lend two hundred

pounds to a widow-woman, whose house, like Mrs. Fleecer's, was burned down uninsured, to set her up again in the stationery line and a circulating library, eh? Ho! ho! ho! And lend it at five *per cent.* too, with little better than no security. *That's what you'd have had me do; but, ho! ho! ho! that isn't the way to carry on the war, ma'am.*"

"War you may indeed call it, and a war of extermination," said Mrs. Quiddy; adding—"And that is exactly a case in point:—you might have done great good, to her, without loss to yourself; for by this time the poor lady would have repaid you every guinea of the loan."

"And how can you know that?" inquired he.

"I dare say I shall incur your contempt by the confession; nevertheless I'll risk it," replied she. "Out of my own economies I lent her the money. She has prospered; has repaid me to the uttermost farthing, and is now supporting herself and two daughters respectably, which she could not otherwise have done."

"What, ma'am!" exclaimed he, with astonishment; "and lent it to her without security?"

"No, no," replied she, "I was not quite such a fool as that; neither would I have disgraced myself by a proceeding so unworthy of the wife of Phineas Quiddy."

"Well, well," said Quiddy, in a conciliatory tone; "then the matter was not so very bad, after all. But what *was* the security you took?"

"Her well-known integrity and—*sheer industry*, Mr. Quiddy," said she, dropping him a low courtesy of mock respect. And she quitted the room. Our gentleman thrust his hands into his pockets, paced up and down the apartment (every third step being a violent stamp) and exclaimed—

"This is too bad—too bad! If ever I find her out in being concerned in another such infamous transaction, hang me if I don't try to get a divorce, though it should cost me the best part of a thousand pounds; and so I'll go and tell her at once."

He followed the lady with a determined intention to carry his threat into execution ; but, when it came to the point of so doing—he didn't.

* * * * *

Some years have elapsed—our hero has just entered his forty-ninth year. He is in the prime of life. Excepting a determination of blood to the head, which occurred upon any sudden and powerful excitement, but which, perhaps, owed its origin partly to overfeeding (a habit in which from his youth upwards he had indulged), partly to overstrained attention to his sheer-industry pursuits, his health is good. He has attained one of the two great objects of his ambition : he has *rounded his hundred thousand pounds* ;—he is at the point of attaining the other, the next dearest wish of his heart : in the coming week he is to receive the honour of knighthood, when he will stand before the astonished world in the imposing attitude of SIR PHINEAS QUIDDY !

Had Miss Biffin* herself applied to the Heralds' College for *arms* it is possible that that ingenious and accommodating Institution would have furnished her with them : they found, or invented, armorial bearings even for a Phineas Quiddy !

Elate with thoughts of the honours which the coming week would confer upon him, Quiddy was returning from the College in St. Paul's (whither he had been on business concerning the important matter in question) to his house in Russell-square. His nearest way lay through the Old Bailey. Arrived there, his passage was impeded by a vast concourse of people. Inquiring

* About the period in question, this young lady was one of the shows of London. Having been sent into the world without arms, she, in the noble spirit of independence, and regardless of the omission, snapped her fingers at Nature, and cut out watch-papers with her toes ! Could the occupation in this instance have been properly called a *handicraft* ?

the cause of the assemblage, he was informed that a man was standing in the pillory: it was an attorney who, some time previously, had been struck off the rolls for certain malpractices in his profession; and was now suffering the punishment for perjury, of which he had been convicted at the last Old Bailey Sessions. As the sight would cost him nothing, Quiddy resolved to enjoy it; accordingly he forced his way through the crowd to within a few feet of the scaffold. The back of the unfortunate wretch was then towards him; but a gyration of the machine in which he was exhibited brought them face to face. Their eyes met. In the culprit Quiddy with horror beheld his former friend, and the coadjutor in many of his vile transactions—
ISCARIOT HITCHFLAT!

“Villain!” screamed Hitchflat, “why are you here to stare at me? Do you forget that it has been in my power to place you where *I* am standing now? Your turn may yet come.”

Quiddy trembled through every nerve—so unexpected was the scene, so startling the address. In one brief instant a recollection of all the less pleasing passages of his sheer-industry career rushed through the brain of the terror-stricken man, and he fell senseless and speechless into the arms of one of the bystanders.

In that state was he carried home. At his house were waiting by appointment the coachmaker to receive orders for the emblazoning of his new-found arms on the panels of his carriage; the tailor with the court-suit in which, in the coming week, he was to have presented himself to royalty; and Mr. Goodenough, an attorney, who transacted for him the least disreputable portions of his legal affairs. These were, of course, dismissed—Mr. Goodenough intimating that *his* business with his client being of an important character, it would be proper that he should be summoned immediately on Mr. Quiddy’s restoration to consciousness.

The family physician, Dr. Wad, was almost instantly in attendance. He declared the case to be alarming—he feared hopeless—it was an attack of apoplexy as severe as any he had ever witnessed. Other advice was called in, and a consultation was held. All that medical skill could do was done, but to no purpose. For three nights and three days (during which time his wife scarcely for a moment quitted his bedside) he neither moved nor spoke, nor exhibited the slightest sign of consciousness ; at the end of that period—died Phineas Quiddy.

As is by no means uncommon with money-grippers, Quiddy had never been able to prevail upon himself to make a will. He could not endure the thought of providing for the disposal or dispersion of his wealth, although that event must be preceded by one which would render that wealth utterly worthless and useless to himself. At length, however, he yielded to the persuasions of Mr. Goodenough ; and the object of his appointment (which we have noticed) with that gentleman was the preparation of the disagreeable document. This object was frustrated and he died intestate.

Agreeably to the directions of his widow, his funeral was private : wisely she thought that the less notice was attracted to the deceased, the better. She was a good Shakspearian, and “curses not loud but deep” might probably have occurred to her recollection.

Childless, friendless, without a relative in the world, Quiddy was attended to the grave by one mourning coach, containing Sir Gog Cheshire, Doctor Wad, Mr. Goodenough, and the managing clerk of the Mark-lane establishment. Quiddy’s own carriage followed ; and it was a striking fact that the coachman, who had lived five years in his service, having nothing else to do in this slow march than to let his horses follow their noses in the wake of the mourning-coach, *was unconcernedly employed in cracking nuts !*

On the very day, and at nearly the same hour, in

which Phineas Quiddy was to have risen *Sir* Phineas, was he placed in a vault in the church of the parish in which he had last dwelt. His *friends* noticed this as a striking—an awful coincidence.

In all its important points we have related his career. Its conclusion may be told in one word which was mistakenly used by Sir Gog Cheshire, who, be it known, had become somewhat deaf.

“So, Cheshire,” said her ladyship to him, on his return from the funeral, “so I hear Quiddy has died intestate.”

“Died detested, my lady! ay—in short, d—d died detested.”

Quiddy having not a relative in the world, his widow (by the advice of Mr. Goodenough) took out letters of administration, and succeeded to the whole of his large property. Her first act was to *double* the annuity to her old friend Mrs. Fleecer, who was still living in the country. To have done more would (she considered) have been injudicious; as thereby she might have thrown the old woman inconveniently out of the habits which she had formed. At one time she thought of sending for her to live in Russell-square; but a little reflection convinced her that it was better as it was.

In due time Mrs. Quiddy, assisted by a clever accountant, examined into the state of affairs in Mark-lane. In every existing and unsettled case in which it appeared to her that the deceased had acted oppressively (and in which had he not?) she ordered that restitution or reparation should be made to the oppressed. It was her wish that the establishment should be broken up at once; but, from the variety and complication of its concerns, that was impossible. In a few months, however, the end she desired was satisfactorily accomplished; the remaining property in the warehouses was sold; and the clerks and servants were dismissed, each with a very handsome gratuity.

As we omitted to state in its proper place whether

the widow Quiddy grieved overmuch for the death of her husband, we shall here say no more than that she put on weeds,—and that she looked remarkably well in them.

In order to rid her mind as much as possible of associations with the past, the widow removed from Russell-square to Harley-street,—that melancholy region of hatchments, of which it might more properly be inquired who *dies* than who *lives* there. Here her parties were frequent and select ; and though a certain person was no longer of them, they were not the less agreeable on that account.

Will it be credited—(hardly)—that the wealthy widow received numerous offers of marriage ! Amongst the suitors were a few colonels, some majors, many captains, and subalterns innumerable. There were also three baronets, two Lord Fredericks, a Lord Charles, and a Lord Augustus. They were all amiable, charming, delightful men ; and so purely disinterested in their offers, that not one of them cared a straw for her large fortune. And the more disinterested were they inasmuch as the baronets had estates of their own—which were cruelly dipt : the gallant officers had—nothing but their half-pay ! and the Lords Frederick and Charles and Augustus had—nothing at all. But the lady (and we think wisely) rejected them all, having resolved to be her own mistress for the remainder of her life.

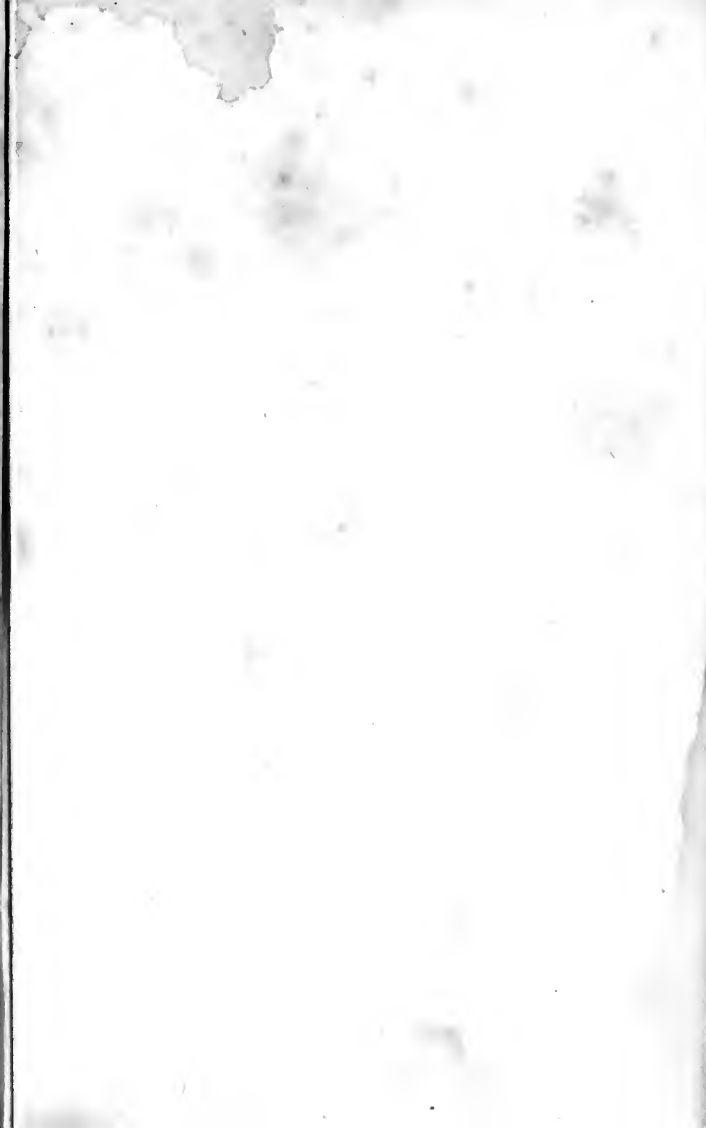
The widow was charitable in the highest sense of the word : she was no canter : she gave, not from fear (as it is probable her late husband would have done had he attained to old age), but from pure feeling, and kindness of heart. Her charities, too, were as well directed as they were extensive. But her chief delight was in assisting the falling, but honest tradesman ; and many a one had she the gratification of seeing restored to credit and led to prosperity, who, but for her timely aid, might have sunk into disgrace and ruin. Yet withal did she not deny herself any of the comforts or

the luxuries of life to the enjoyment of which her wealth entitled her.

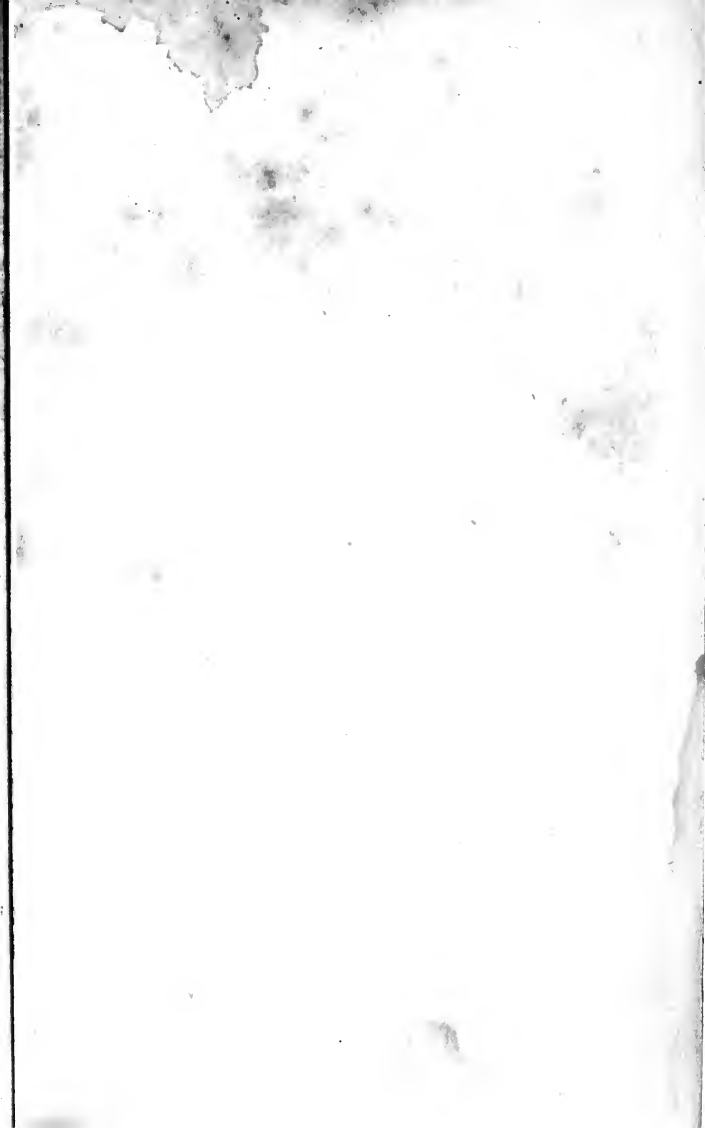
She lived to a good old age ; and died respected, beloved, and regretted by all who knew her best. By her will she left many legacies of various amounts to those of her friends and acquaintances to whom she considered money would be really useful ; to such as stood in no need of it, rings or other trifling memorials.

The large residue of her fortune she bequeathed to the building and endowment of a certain number of almshouses as a refuge for decayed tradesmen or their widows, and a school for the education of their orphans. She probably thought that this distribution of the property would be the best atonement for the manner in which it had been acquired.

THE END.









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